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Citation for published version:

Cairns, D & Cairns, F (ed.) 2012, Atê in the Homeric poems. in Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar. vol. 15, Oxbow Books, pp. 1-52.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

Published In:

Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar

Publisher Rights Statement:

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Atē in the Homeric poems^{*}

Agathe Thornton in memoriam

In a recent paper on *atē* in Aeschylus, Alan Sommerstein makes a powerful case for the view of a number of earlier interpreters that 'harm' (*Schaden*) is the core meaning of *atē*.¹ Sommerstein argues that *atē* must have entered poetic language from ordinary

^{*} This paper derives, less tangentially than one might think, from a project on language, emotion, and society in Classical Greece funded by the Leverhulme Trust. I am very grateful to the Trust for their support. I should also like to thank *PLLS*'s anonymous reviewer, whose constructive comments have improved this article in several places, and Professor Alan Sommerstein for generously allowing me to cite the unpublished work that initially inspired my own research.

¹ Sommerstein (forthcoming). His predecessors include: Havers (1910) 238; Latte (1920/1) 255 = (1968) 4; Stallmach (1968), esp. 1, 12-14, 24, 29, 31, 46-7, 59, 63, 80-4, 88, 94-5, 102;* Mette (1955), esp. 6-7; Frisk (1960-72) i.178 s.v. ἄτη; Chantraine (1968-80) i.3 s.v. ἄάω; Dawe (1968) 104-5;* Stinton (1975) 244; Saïd (1978) 77-8, 84; Padel (1995) 168, 170, 174, 178-9. See now Beekes (2010) i.162-3 s.v. ἄτη. The explanation is an ancient one: see Σ D on *Il.* 1.412; D, bT on *Il.* 2.111; bT on *Il.* 9.504, 505; bT on *Il.* 19.91; D on *Il.* 19.95; Σ V on *Od.* 15.233; Hsch. α 5 (ἄάατον), 24-32 (ἄάσαι-ἄαστόν), 35 (ἄάται), 37 (ἄάτοις), 38 (ἄάτον), 40

speech, where the earliest evidence for its use is in Cretan legal inscriptions, in which it means ‘harm’, ‘damage’, or ‘loss’, a sense that is confirmed by a number of other (non-Homeric) sources.² My argument in this paper endorses Sommerstein’s central claim about the core meaning of *atē*. I also agree with him that this core meaning is likely to be the term’s original meaning; but though that hypothesis is both compatible with and, in a sense, supported by my own analysis, I do not rely upon it in what follows. Furthermore, I consider only the usage of *atē*, not its etymology, because the

(ἀ ατύλον), 4636 (ἀ ν ατί), 8050 (ἀ τέ ο ν τ α), 8075 (ἄτη), 8078

(ἄτηρόν), 8214 (ἄτωμένη); η 573 (ἦ ν ἄ τ η ν); cf. Stallmach (1968) 80 n.135.

[*On the dating of these items and their ordering in fnn., see bibliography.]

² Sommerstein (forthcoming) [000]: “The earliest traceable meaning of *ate* (or rather *awata*) is ‘harm, damage, loss’, a semantic range corresponding roughly to that of two classical Attic words, *blabe* and *zemia*. In Cretan legal texts it is the regular word for a sum to be paid as a penalty or as compensation [*IC* iv.72, col. VI.9-24, col. XI.31-42; cf. Stallmach (1968) 64; Mette (1955) 6]. A series of glosses in Hesychius demonstrate the existence of a verb *a(w)askein* or *a(w)assein* meaning ‘to harm’

[s.vv. ἀάβακτοι, ἀάσκει, ἀγατᾷσθαι, ἄσαι, κατέβασκε] ...” Cf. the antithesis

with *kerdos* in Hes. *Op.* 352; Sol. 13.74-5 W; Thgn. 133; A. *Cho.* 824-5; *Eum.* 1006-9; S. *OC* 92-3; Stallmach (1968) 12, 60, 82; Dawe (1968) 98-9; Saïd (1978) 84; Doyle (1984) 29. For others, however, the sense ‘harm’, both in Hom. and in later authors, is a secondary development: Seiler (1954), esp. 410, 416-17; Müller (1956) 1-2; cf. Francis (1983) 100; Doyle (1984) 1.

latter is obscure and disputed:³ though some suggestions may be philologically more probable than others, the only practical way to distinguish between candidates is usage, and so one might as well focus solely on that. In that regard, my approach to the Homeric evidence is holistic, not developmental, not because development in epic semantics and diction is untraceable in principle, but because those who trace such development in the case of *atē* do so *parti pris* and *a priori*.⁴ Instead, I argue that an inductive survey of all the instances of *atē* and its cognates in Homer will show that ‘harm’ is the single common element that unites them. One could see this as the term’s ‘focal meaning’ or ‘primary nuclear sense’, terms developed by G.E.L. Owen and J.L. Austin respectively in explanation of Aristotle’s ὁμονυμία πρὸς ἓν (*Met.* Γ, 1003a33ff.), by which the various senses of a term (e.g. ‘healthy’) are in different ways related by their focus on a single, central concept (e.g. health). Under either description, we are dealing with a prototype effect, a phenomenon explicated at length

³ See Boisacq (1923) i.96 s.v. ἄτη; Mette (1955) 5-6; Seiler (1954) 409-10 (cf.

(1955) 9); Frisk (1960-72) i.178 s.v. ἄτη; Chantraine (1968-80) i.3 s.v. ἄάω;

Beekes (2010) i.162-3 s.v. ἄτη; for recent arguments in favour of particular

etymologies, see Wyatt (1982); Francis (1983).

⁴ See, e.g. Seiler (1954: repeated in Seiler 1955) on the development, within the *Iliad* itself, from the ‘original’ core meaning of *Verblendung* expressed by the aor. middle of the verb to the ‘new’ active/passive sense, ‘harm’/‘be harmed’; Müller (1956) on the development from “die echte alte ἄτη” (pp.5-7), i.e. folly inspired by a hostile divinity, to *Schaden*.

by Lakoff,⁵ by which certain senses of a term or members of a category assume greater salience than others in usage and in the minds of users. But while all instances relate in some way to this common feature, Homeric usage is not single; and it is not the ‘objective’ sense, ‘ruin’ or ‘disaster’, that is most common in Homer, but the ‘subjective’ one, ‘error’, ‘folly’, ‘blindness’.⁶ Thus the Homeric semantics of *atē* exhibit not one, but two prototype effects, with ‘harm’ as the category’s focal meaning and ‘folly’ *vel sim.* as its ‘best example’.⁷ These two propositions can be true, I argue, because even where *atē* bears the ‘subjective’ sense of ‘folly’ or ‘blindness’ the ‘objective’ sense of ‘ruin’ is *logically* prior. The relation between the two senses is one of metonymy, a ubiquitous mechanism for the extension of semantic categories. In this particular case, the metonymy is a variant of a very familiar type, in which a state of mind and a related state of affairs are called by the same name, as in the case of English ‘guilt’ or Greek *aischynē* (both ‘shame’ and shame’s object, ‘disgrace’). We might compare the *aidōs* that, in Thersites’ case, is not a subjective reaction, but the object on which such a reaction might focus (his genitalia, *Il.* 2.262). Here, the state of mind is the term’s original reference, the state of affairs a metonymous extension, but in the case of English ‘guilt’ the converse

⁵ See Owen (1960) 169 = (1985) 184 (cf. Hamlyn (1977/8); Shields (1999), esp. 226-36; Ward (2008), esp. 3, 17-18, 62-4, 98-102, 108-11); Austin (1979) 71; Lakoff (1987), esp. 18-19 on the effect identified by Owen and Austin.

⁶ Cf. Padel (1995) 184.

⁷ On the latter, see Lakoff (1987) 7, 26, 45, 85-6. In my view, recognition of these two forms of prototypicality meets Neuburg’s demand (1993: 499) for an account of the unity behind the senses of *atē* that does not “rationalize away the illusion of duality” in Homeric usage.

relation obtains. In my view, the logical priority of ‘ruin’ over ‘folly’ in the semantics of *atē* suggests that, in chronological terms, its development is more likely to have been from objective to subjective; but nothing of what follows depends upon the truth of that hypothesis.

This established, I go on to investigate what kind of error or folly *atē* is, what its implications are for Homeric ideas of agency and responsibility, and why this sense, rather than the ‘objective’ one, should be the Homeric (and especially the Iliadic) prototype. Consideration of these issues will require us also to investigate the extent to which the sense and reference of *atē* overlap with those of *atasthalīē*, and to think more generally about the relative importance of each of these concepts in the two poems’ construction of plot and character.

The basic sense ‘harm’ is especially apparent in the usage of the verb, *aaō*. At *Od.* 21.293-304, for example, the verb is used to describe both the harmful effect of wine on the senses and the damage that this can do to one’s fortunes:

“οἶνός σε τρώει μελιθήης, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους

βλάπτει, ὅς ἄν μιν χανδὸν ἔλη μηδ' αἴσιμα πίνη.

οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον, ἀγακλυτὸν Εὐρυτίωνα,

295

ἄασ' ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ μεγαθύμου Πειριθόοιο,

ἐς Λαπίθας ἐλθόνθ'· ὁ δ' ἐπεὶ φρένας ἄασεν οἴνῳ,

μαινόμενος κάκ' ἔρεξε δόμον κάτα Πειριθόοιο.

ἥρωας δ' ἄχος εἶλε, διὲκ προθύρου δὲ θύραζε

ἔλκον ἀναΐξαντες, ἀπ' οὔατα νηλεῖ χαλκῷ 300

ῥῖνάς τ' ἀμήσαντες· ὁ δὲ φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀασθεῖς

ἦϊεν ἦν ἄτην ὀχέων ἄεσίφρονι θυμῷ.

ἐξ οὗ Κενταύροισι καὶ ἀνδράσι νεῖκος ἐτύχθη,

οἳ δ' αὐτῷ πρώτῳ κακὸν εὔρετο οἴνοβαρείων.”

In this passage, in which Antinous compares the disguised Odysseus to the drunken centaur, Eurytion, the point of the exemplum is the damage (τρώει) and harm (βλάπτει) that wine can cause. At the same time, though it is Eurytion's mind that is affected by the wine, so that it becomes *aesiphron*, the *atē* that he bears with him as he departs seems to include his mutilation at the hands of the Lapiths, the harmful state of affairs that results from his harmful state of mind.

Wine is also a factor at *Od.* 11.61-5, where Elpenor explains:

“ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἶσα κακὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἶνος·

Κίρκης δ' ἐν μεγάρῳ καταλέγμενος οὐκ ἐνόησα

ἄψορρον καταβῆναι ἰὼν ἐς κλίμακα μακρὴν,

ἀλλὰ καταντικρὺ τέγεος πέσον· ἐκ δέ μοι αὐχὴν

ἀστραγάλων ἔαγη, ψυχὴ δ' Ἀϊδόςδε κατῆλθε.”

In this case, the harm caused by the “*daimōn*’s evil fate” may conceivably be Elpenor’s death itself, though it could also be divine interference in his thought processes, but the harm caused by wine is primarily the befuddlement that caused his misjudgement (οὐκ ἐνόησα, 62) and his fall.

The same picture, in which sensory impairment leads to disaster, is apparent also in the ‘harm’ caused to Odysseus by the sleep that allowed his companions to open Aeolus’ bag of winds in *Odyssey* 10, and to kill and eat the cattle of the sun in Book 12.

“ἄσάν μ' ἔταροί τε κακοὶ πρὸς τοῖσί τε ὕπνος

σχέτλιος. ἀλλ' ἀκέσασθε, φίλοι· δύναμις γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν.”

Od. 10.68-9

“Ζεῦ πάτερ ἡ δ' ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες,

ἧ με μάλ' εἰς ἄτην κοιμήσατε νηλεῖ ὕπνω,

οἱ δ' ἔταροι μέγα ἔργον ἐμητίσαντο μένοντες.”

Od. 12.371-3

Both Odysseus' companions and sleep caused the misfortune that resulted when the winds escaped from the bag, but the sleep also caused the temporary inattention which allowed this to take place. In the second passage, *atē* is the result of the sleep sent by Zeus and the other gods – perhaps including the temporary inattention, but indisputably and primarily encompassing the harm that resulted.

The verb refers to the harmful results of inattention also in the exemplum of Zeus' *atē* which is central to Agamemnon's 'Apology' at *Il.* 19.112-13:

“Ζεὺς δ' οὐ τι δολοφροσύνην ἐνόησεν,
ἀλλ' ὅμοσεν μέγαν ὄρκον, ἔπειτα δὲ πολλὸν ἄασθη.”

Here, the use of the verb ἄασθη is at least partially (and I should say primarily) motivated by a focus on the results of the deception, even if there is also a reference to the deception as such (*qua* 'blindness' or 'delusion'). This focus would be more emphatic if we could be sure that ἔπειτα is temporal (Zeus is deceived by Hera into swearing the oath, *and then* ἄασθη), as I suspect it is, but it is there even if the deception and the misjudgement that it entails are part of the 'harm' in question.⁸

⁸ In favour of the temporal sense, see Dawe (1968) 98; against, Leaf (1902) ii.270 on 19.111; Willcock (1984) 274 on 19.113; Edwards (1991) 251 on 19.113-16. Though there are parallels (cited by Edwards) for a modal sense ('therein'), the view that the

Similar is *Il.* 8.228-41:

“αἰδῶς Ἀργεῖοι, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, εἶδος ἀγητοί·
πῇ ἔβαν εὐχωλαί, ὅτε δὴ φάμεν εἶναι ἄριστοι,
ἄς ὁπότ’ ἐν Λήμνῳ κενεαυχέες ἡγοράασθε, 230
ἔσθοντες κρέα πολλὰ βοῶν ὀρθοκραιράων
πίνοντες κρητῆρας ἐπιστεφέας οἴνοιο,
Τρώων ἄνθ’ ἐκατόν τε διηκοσίων τε ἕκαστος
στήσεσθ’ ἐν πολέμῳ· νῦν δ’ οὐδ’ ἐνὸς ἄξιοί εἰμεν
Ἕκτορος, ὃς τάχα νῆας ἐνιπρήσει πυρὶ κηλέῳ. 235
Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἧ ῥά τιν’ ἤδη ὑπερμενέων βασιλῆων
τῇδ’ ἄτη ἄσας καί μιν μέγα κῦδος ἀπηύρας;
οὐ μὲν δὴ ποτέ φημι τεὸν περικαλλέα βωμόν
νηῖ πολυκλήϊδι παρελθέμεν ἐνθάδε ἔρρων,
ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσι βοῶν δημόν καὶ μηρί’ ἔκηα 240

adverb does not have its normal, temporal sense seems to me to rest on an *a priori*

assumption that ἀάσθη must mean “was blinded” rather than e.g. “was ruined”.

ἰέμενος Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἐξαλαπάξει.”

Agamemnon’s remarks are prompted by the reversal in Achaean fortunes, which he suggests may be attributable to Zeus’ anger. The primary emphasis is on results, especially the loss of *kudos*, and accordingly “this *atē*” (237) must bear some reference to the present situation, as Agamemnon constructs it. At the same time, Agamemnon indicates that the reversal in Achaean fortunes also constitutes a reversal in Achaean expectations (229-35), and so behind Achaean failure lies an apparently misplaced Achaean expectation of success. The general terms in which Agamemnon expresses himself conceal an implicit reference to his own deception by Zeus in Book 2. Ignorant that he has in fact been deceived, Agamemnon himself disingenuously presents this scenario in terms of *atē* in the speech in which he (disastrously) tests his troops’ resolve at 2.110-15:

“ὦ φίλοι ἥρωες Δαναοὶ θεράποντες Ἄρηος 110

Ζεὺς με μέγα Κρονίδης ἄτη ἐνέδησε βαρεῖη

σχέτλιος, ὃς πρὶν μὲν μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν

Ἴλιον ἐκπέρσαντ’ εὐτείχεον ἀπονέεσθαι,

νῦν δὲ κακὴν ἀπάτην βουλεύσατο, καί με κελεύει

δυσκλέα Ἄργος ἰκέσθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ὤλεσα λαόν.” 115

Results, as Agamemnon represents them, have been disastrous, but those results also betray a miscalculation of the prospects of success, an error brought about by divine deception. In the grip of *atē*, Agamemnon ironically represents himself as in the grip of *atē*; the truth of this is brought home to him by the consequences of his folly, as he presents them in Book 8.

Already in these few passages, then, we see that *atē* and *aaō* can encompass damage both to a person's fortunes and to his or her mental processes. *Atē* can refer to a state of affairs, but also to a state of mind. Most often, *atē* as a state of mind is the cause of *atē* as a state of affairs, but an impaired state of mind can also be presented as a disastrous consequence rather than as the error that causes disastrous consequences, as in the case of the *atē* that takes hold of Patroclus' *phrenes* in *Iliad* 16 (805-6):

τὸν δ' ἄτη φρένας εἴλε, λύθεν δ' ὑπὸ φαίδιμα γυῖα,
στῇ δὲ ταφών·

This is a mental impairment (στῇ δὲ ταφών, 806),⁹ and, in so far as it renders Patroclus vulnerable to the blows that finally kill him, a cause of ensuing disaster; but it is not the disastrous error that sets this whole sequence in motion. Instead, like the buckling of the knees in the same context, it is one of the disastrous results of Patroclus' earlier misjudgement, the harmful state of mind that causes him to disregard Achilles' instructions at 16.684-91:

⁹ See Leaf (1900-2) ii.211 on 16.805; cf. Stallmach (1968) 37; Doyle (1984) 7.

Πάτροκλος δ' ἵπποισι καὶ Αὐτομέδοντι κελεύσας

Τρῶας καὶ Λυκίους μετεκίαθε, καὶ μέγ' ἀάσθη

685

νήπιος· εἰ δὲ ἔπος Πηληϊάδαο φύλαξεν

ἧ τ' ἂν ὑπέκφυγε κῆρα κακὴν μέλανος θανάτοιο.

ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τε Διὸς κρείσσων νόος ἢ ἐπερ ἀνδρῶν·

ὅς τε καὶ ἄλκιμον ἄνδρα φοβεῖ καὶ ἀφείλετο νίκην

ῥηϊδίως, ὅτε δ' αὐτὸς ἐποτρύνησι μάχεσθαι·

690

ὅς οἱ καὶ τότε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἀνῆκεν.

The fundamental association with the notion of ‘harm’ and the way in which the harmful state of mind and the harmful state of affairs are mutually entailed is well illustrated in Phoenix’s allegory of the Litai (*Il.* 9.496-514):

“ἀλλ' Ἀχιλεῦ δάμασον θυμὸν μέγαν· οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ

νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν· στρεπτοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί,

τῶν περ καὶ μείζων ἀρετὴ τιμὴ τε βίη τε.

καὶ μὲν τοὺς θυέεσσι καὶ εὐχολῆς ἀγανῆσι

λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ τε παρατρωπῶσ' ἄνθρωποι

500

λίσσόμενοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῇ καὶ ἀμάρτη.

καὶ γάρ τε λιταὶ εἰσι Διὸς κοῦραι μέγαλοιο

χολαί τε ῥυσαί τε παραβλῶπές τ' ὀφθαλμῷ,

αἳ ῥά τε καὶ μετόπισθ' ἄτης ἀλέγουσι κιοῦσαι.

ἣ δ' ἄτη σθεναρὴ τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, οὔνεκα πάσας

505

πολλὸν ὑπεκπροθέει, φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἴαν

βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους· αἳ δ' ἐξακέονται ὀπίσσω.

ὅς μὲν τ' αἰδέσεται κούρας Διὸς ἄσσον ἰούσας,

τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὤνησαν καὶ τ' ἔκλυον εὐχομένοιο·

ὅς δέ κ' ἀνήνηται καὶ τε στερεῶς ἀποείπη,

510

λίσσονται δ' ἄρα ταί γε Δία Κρονίωνα κιοῦσαι

τῷ ἄτην ἄμ' ἔπεσθαι, ἵνα βλαφθεὶς ἀποτίσῃ.

ἀλλ' Ἀχιλεῦ πόρε καὶ σὺ Διὸς κούρησιν ἔπεςθαι

τιμὴν, ἥ τ' ἄλλων περ ἐπιγνάμπτει νόον ἐσθλῶν.”

Here, the personified Atē appears twice, first as the cause of the original offence and second as a consequence of rejecting reparation. In both cases, it encompasses both mental impairment and its disastrous consequences: Agamemnon’s mind was impaired when he first insulted Achilles, but that action has now led to disaster; the mistake which Achilles would be making if he rejected the Embassy would be as disastrous in its consequences as the original offence.¹⁰ There are two stages of cause and effect, with the emphasis first on the subjective aspect and then on the objective: the Atē which outruns the Litai is harmful (βλάπτουσ’ , 507), both in that it has bad consequences that have to be remedied by entreaty and in so far as it is the affliction of a man who “transgresses and errs” (ὑπερβήη καὶ ἀμάρτη, 501). Equally, the point of the warning that it would be a mistake on Achilles’ part to refuse the Embassy’s request is that this would be harmful to Achilles – “harmed” (βλαφθεὶς) in 512 points towards the end of the sequence, the disaster to Achilles that consists in his having to pay for his mistake (ἀποτίση, *ibid.*).¹¹ Atē covers both

¹⁰ That this is the point of the allegory seems to me obvious and incontrovertible; I see no “obscurity”, *pace* Adkins (1982) 307. I return to this passage and to this understanding of it repeatedly below.

¹¹ Those who argue that this passage introduces a ‘new’, ‘moralized’ application of atē as punishment for wrongdoing (Müller (1956) 4; Bremer (1969) 107; Saïd (1978)

the harm that results from a human being's actions and the harm to his mental faculties that causes that outcome in the first place. In the one case we translate it as 'delusion', and in the other 'disaster', but though there are contexts in which these senses are distinct, it is often very difficult to decide which is in play, and it is normal in Homer for each to imply the other – even where the primary reference is to mental impairment, this is an impairment that has objectively disastrous consequences, and even where it refers to consequences, these are regularly the result of some misjudgement.

The following table presents in summary form what I see as the relative frequency of cases in which *atē* refers primarily to the mental impairment that is the cause of disaster, those in which it refers primarily to the disaster that typically results from mental impairment, and those which are ambivalent or indeterminate (e.g. when the relevant term seems to refer more or less equally both to the initial harm of mental impairment and to its harmful consequences).¹²

89; Yamagata (1991) 9 = (1994) 51) misread the force of the allegory; the *atē* that is a punishment sent by the gods merely mythologizes the potentially disastrous consequences of persistence in anger and failure to come to terms. Stallmach (1968) 58-9 and 88 has it both ways.

¹² The full list of passages is: cause (noun) *Il.* 1.412; 6.356; 9.115, 504, 505; 10.391; 16.274; 19.88, 91, 126, 129, 136, 270; 24.28; *Od.* 4.261; 15.233; 23.223; (verb) *Il.* 9.116, 119, 537; 11.340; 16.685; 19.91, 95, 129, 136, 137; *Od.* 4.503, 509; 21.297, 301; effect (noun) *Il.* 8.237; 16.805; 24.480 (see Stallmach (1968) 81-2 and contrast Doyle (1984) 17; Finkelberg (1995) 19); *Od.* 12.372 (see Dodds (1951) 19 n.17;

cause				effect				ambiguous			
<i>Iliad</i>		<i>Odyssey</i>		<i>Iliad</i>		<i>Odyssey</i>		<i>Iliad</i>		<i>Odyssey</i>	
noun	verb	noun	verb	noun	verb	noun	verb	noun	verb	noun	verb
14	10	3	4	3	2	1	0	3	0	1	3

The overall picture would not be greatly affected by re-assignment of individual cases or by greater agnosticism regarding ambiguous examples: the prototypical sense of *atē* in Homer is clearly ‘delusion’. But such delusion must prove disastrous if it is to count as a case of *atē*; in every case the diagnosis of *atē* is *post factum* – the delusion is postulated on the fact that disaster has occurred.¹³ The only two apparent exceptions – where Achilles diagnoses Agamemnon’s *atē* on the basis of his conduct in Book 1 (echoed by Patroclus at 16.270-4) – are not in fact so. Achilles prays that Zeus cause the Achaeans to be killed by their ships

“ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος,

γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων

ἦν ἄτην ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν.”

Doyle (1984) 18; contrast Finkelberg (1995) 19); (verb) *Il.* 8.237; 19.113; ambiguous (noun) *Il.* 2.111; 9.18, 512; *Od.* 21.302; (verb) *Od.* 10.68; 11.61; 21.296.

¹³ Cf. Stallmach (1968) 14, 20-1, 23, 30, 33, 39, 49 n.55 (this is part of the *Sinnkern des Phänomens*), 80; Dawe (1968) 113; Bremer (1969) 103; Saïd (1978) 77-8; Wyatt (1982) 260-1; Neuburg (1993) 499; Yamagata (1994) 54 n.30; Scodel (2008) 115.

Achilles is making a prediction with reference to a time in the future when Agamemnon will recognize, on the basis of its results, that his treatment of Achilles in Book 1 was a big mistake.¹⁴ Accordingly, though ‘delusion’ is by far the most frequent sense of *atē* in Homer, the sense ‘disaster’ is logically prior. This is the fundamental fact that binds Homeric *atē* closely to the same concept in prose and later poetry, including tragedy.¹⁵

Neither the impairment of one’s judgement nor the impairment of one’s fortunes is something a person *wants*.¹⁶ To say that one’s action was caused by *atē* is thus to say, once its actual consequences have become clear, that had one known what those consequences would be, one would not have acted as one did. This is well brought out by Penelope’s observations at *Od.* 23.218-24:

“οὐδέ κεν Ἀργεΐη Ἑλένη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,

ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἄλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότῃ καὶ εὐνῇ,

εἰ ἤδη, ὃ μιν αὖτις ἀρήϊοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν

220

ἀξέμεναι οἰκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔμελλον.

¹⁴ Cf. Stallmach (1968) 57-8.

¹⁵ For *atē* in tragedy, see Stallmach (1968); Saïd (1978) 96-142; Doyle (1984) 49-144; Padel (1995) 188-96, 204-9, 249-59; Sommerstein (forthcoming).

¹⁶ Stallmach (1968) 20, 80.

τὴν δ' ἣ τοι ῥέξαι θεὸς ὤρορεν ἔργον ἀεικές·

τὴν δ' ἄτην οὐ πρόσθεν ἔῳ ἐγκάθετο θυμῷ

λυγρὴν, ἐξ ἧς πρῶτα καὶ ἡμέας ἵκετο πένθος.”

Helen would not have committed adultery if she had known that she would be brought home again. This is why there is a typical connexion between *atē* and regret,¹⁷ as in the case of Helen’s own evaluation at *Od.* 4.259-64, in the context of her narrative of her encounter with the disguised Odysseus within the walls of Troy. By the time Odysseus returned to the Argive camp, he had killed many Trojans. The Trojan women lamented, but not Helen:

“ἔνθ' ἄλλαι Τρῳαὶ λίγ' ἐκώκυον· αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ

χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ ἤδη μοι κραδίη τέτραπτο νεέσθαι 260

ἄψ οἴκόνδ', ἄτην δὲ μετέστενον, ἦν Ἀφροδίτη

δῶχ', ὅτε μ' ἤγαγε κεῖσε φίλης ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης,

παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν νοσφισσαμένην θάλαμόν τε πόσιν τε

¹⁷ Cf. Wyatt (1982) 260-1; but though the *atē*-sequence (from error to disaster)

creates a scenario in which there is ample scope for regret, *atē* is never regret as such, and so there is no room for Wyatt’s hypothesis that *atē* originally denoted a feeling of regret focusing on over-indulgence in food and drink. For more on *atē* and regret, see below.

οὐ τευ δευόμενον, οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτε τι εἶδος.”

Helen’s reference to her (god-sent) *atē* is motivated by the desire to repudiate her actions before an audience that includes Menelaus, but it is also clear that the change of heart and the regret of which she wants to persuade her listeners were motivated by her recognition – given that the disguised Odysseus had told her “the whole purpose of the Achaeans” (256) – that she might soon have to face the unfortunate consequences of her actions.¹⁸

These two passages raise a number of issues. For both Helen and Penelope the result of Helen’s action in eloping with Paris indicates that she could not have been deliberating clearly when she took the decision to leave – she must have been subject to *atē*. Both, moreover, trace the ultimate source of that *atē* not to Helen’s character, but to a god. The reasoning in both cases has the same outline: given that Helen’s situation in Sparta was an enviable one, and given that her actions would one day catch up with her, she must have been deranged to run away with Paris; only divine influence can explain a decision that, with hindsight, looks so inexplicable. But within

¹⁸ The sincerity of this regret is famously questioned by Menelaus’ ensuing tale (4.274-84) of how Helen subsequently sought to expose the Achaeans’ stratagem. The genuineness of her change of heart thus remains moot; but still the construction that she wishes her audience to accept is of regret for an action whose consequences have proved to be negative. Though Menelaus undercuts that representation, he tactfully attributes Helen’s pro-Trojan actions to divine influence (274-5), just as she herself had attributed her initial error to Aphrodite (261-2).

that outline the two evaluations diverge. Helen's purpose is to flatter Menelaus – it was an aberration to leave a man like him. But Penelope's aim is to explain to Odysseus that it was her very desire not to end up like Helen that made her reluctant to believe that he had actually returned. In Helen's construction, any blame that she might incur is implicit; in Penelope's, though it was a god that caused Helen to act 'out of character', still her action was *aeikes*, a cause of great suffering to others as well as to herself, and something that she "put in her own mind"; and the implication remains that Helen herself was ready to commit such an action because she failed to reflect on either its consequences or its character.¹⁹

Helen and Penelope attribute Helen's *atē* to an external cause, i.e. divine influence. This is common, but not invariable: there are 14 clear cases in which the noun *atē* is used of a scenario in which divine influence is at work, and 9 in which the same is true of the verb. This leaves 8 cases of the noun and 7 of the verb in which the source of *atē* seems to lie within the individual. Dodds alleges (1951: 5) that where the agent of *atē* is identified, that agent is a supernatural one, and concludes that supernatural origin is to be supplied even where it is not specified.²⁰ In some cases one might be

¹⁹ For more on these evaluations of Helen's conduct, see below.

²⁰ Dodds is aware that his generalization does not in fact hold, but buries the concession in an endnote (1951: 19 n.20). Similarly Stallmach regards divine causation as fundamental or essential to *atē* (1968: 39-40, 47, 84-92, 99, 102), despite his recognition of cases with non-divine origins (in oneself, in the actions of others, in forces such as sleep and wine) at pp.45-8. Views similar to Dodds's are expressed in Bremer (1969) 104, 107, 111, 114; Wyatt (1982) 262; Doyle (1984) 16; and (with qualifications) Williams (1993) 53. Stallmach's tendency to privilege external divine

tempted to go down that road, for example in the case of Helen's reference to Paris' *atē* at *Il.* 6.355-6²¹ – not on the grounds that Zeus is said to be responsible for the couple's fate in the next line, but because the ultimate source of the *atē* could be seen, as in Helen's own case in the *Odyssey*, as Aphrodite. The same may, but need not, be true also of the later instance at 24.28-30, where Aphrodite is said to excite Paris' lust, but the *atē* seems to lie in his own decision to act on that as opposed to other

origins in spite of acknowledging cases of non-divine sources (both exogenous and endogenous) is shared by Saïd (1978) 80-2, 95. For the divine origin as merely an “option”, cf. Padel (1995) 183-4.

²¹ *Il.* 6.354-8:

“ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν εἴσελθε καὶ ἔζεο τῷ δ' ἐπὶ δίφρῳ

δᾶερ, ἐπεὶ σε μάλιστα πόνος φρένας ἀμφιβέβηκεν

εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο κυνὸς καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ' ἄτης,

οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, ὥς καὶ ὀπίσσω

ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι.”

motives.²² But in other cases it would be wrong to make this assumption. The crucial point is that gods are in fact *not* the only specified agents of *atē* – there are examples in which the source of *atē* is external, but not divine. We have already considered the

²² 24.28-30:

[Hera, Poseidon, and Athena] ἔχον ὥς σφιν πρῶτον ἀπήχθετο Ἴλιος
ἰρή

καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ' ἄτης,

ὃς νείκεσσε θεὰς ὅτε οἱ μέσσαιλον ἵκοντο,

τὴν δ' ἦνυσ' ἥ οἱ πόρε μαχλοσύνην ἀλεγεινήν.

On the text in both these passages (and at 3.100, where editors generally prefer Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ' ἄρχης, the alternative in all three places), see Cauer (1921) 69-70; Stallmach (1968) 96; Müller (1956) 3; Kirk (1985) 277 on 3.100; (1990) 207 on 6.356; Richardson (1993) 279 on 24.28. The variants are ancient, and it is difficult to choose between them: though it can be argued that ἄρχης is motivated by an erroneous assumption that ἄτης would imply exculpation (cf. Σ A on *Il.* 3.100; Σ T on 24.28), it is also possible that ἄτης arose from a failure fully to appreciate that, in an ethic of reciprocity, ‘starting it’ presupposes blame (as at *Il.* 3.298–9, 351–5; 4.235–9, 269–71; 9.34; 24.369; cf. Allan and Cairns (2011) 143 n.57). The thematic importance of *atē* in the Iliadic *fabula* as a whole (see below) is perhaps slightly in favour of ἄτης.

cases of wine (*Od.* 11.61-5, 21.293-304) and sleep (*Od.* 10.68-9, 12.371-3); admittedly, at *Od.* 12.371-3 sleep is caused by the gods, and in both sleep is quasi-personified (*schetlios*, *nēleēs*); and of course Hypnos can be a fully personified divine agent. Similarly, Dodds (*ibid.*) argues that the instances of wine as the cause of *atē* indicate not that *atē* may have everyday, non-supernatural causes, but that “wine has something supernatural or demonic about it”. But this will not work. Elpenor may be trying to shift the responsibility for his drunkenness on to a *daimōn*, but the *daimōn* and the wine are two distinct factors; and in Antinous’ exemplum the harm that is caused by the wine is reformulated (in 21.297) as harm that Eurytion caused to himself by means of wine; though an exogenous cause of *atē*, like a god, wine may also be an instrument of endogenous *atē* – Eurytion is explicitly said not only to have “harmed his wits with wine” but to have “caused evil to himself” (21.304) – wine is certainly not a supernatural agent here. If that is not enough, conclusive proof that the agent of *atē* need not be supernatural is provided by two cases in which other human beings are its cause – Hector, whose inducements seem to Dolon (now that he has been captured) to have impaired his better judgement (*Il.* 10.391),²³ and the companions of Odysseus, who are the primary cause of the disaster that resulted when he fell asleep and they opened the bag of winds (*Od.* 10.68).

²³ *Il.* 10.391-3:

“πολλῇσιν μ' ἄτησι παρὲκ νόον ἤγαγεν Ἑκτωρ,

ὃς μοι Πηλεΐωνος ἀγαυοῦ μώνυχας ἵππους

δωσέμεναι κατένευσε κτλ.”

Sometimes the external agent is *Atē* herself. This personification reaches its fullest development in the allegory of the *Litai* and in Agamemnon's apology in *Iliad* 19. These are ad hoc inventions tied to very particular persuasive strategies, but they are not wholly isolated: they simply take to a higher level something that is a fundamental feature of the concept's phenomenology, namely the sense that *atē* is something that 'comes over' a person from outside. We see this, for example, in the way that *atē* "took Patroclus' *phrenes*" at *Il.* 16.805 (τὸν δ' ἄτη φρένας εἴλε) and "seizes" the homicide in the simile of *Il.* 24.480 (ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἄν ἄνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ), or in the way that Agamemnon twice describes himself as having been bound by Zeus in *atē* (*Il.* 2.111 and 9.18: Ζεὺς με μέγα Κρονίδης ἄτη ἐνέδησε βαρείῃ); but it is there even in the prevalence of the passive (and middle for passive) in the usage of the verb (14 of 19 instances); the harm that is *atē* is something that one feels happens or is done to one.²⁴ This is a very general phenomenon, common to a whole range of psychic events, especially those that later Greeks called *pathē* and we call emotions. But what does it amount to in this case? "I was harmed" and "my *phrenes* were harmed" imply an agent or instrument, but not necessarily one genuinely external to the agent. If *atē* can seize a person, so can (e.g.) *achos*, *aidōs*, *deos*, *phobos* (i.e. the

²⁴ Cf. Stallmach (1968) 80, 84-5; Dawe (1968) 98; Bremer (1969) 102; Saïd (1978) 80, 86-7; Francis (1983) 91-2, 117-18 n.68. The view of Seiler (1954) that the active and passive senses of the verb as 'harm' and 'be harmed' are secondary developments from an original reflexive sense, 'to act in error', expressed esp. in the aor. med. (cf. n.4 above), seems to me entirely arbitrary, motivated solely by a desire to explain the prototypical Homeric sense as chronologically prior.

impulse to flee), and *cholos* – these are personifiable, of course, but not by any means invariably regarded as genuine, quasi-demonic, external agents.²⁵

In Agamemnon's Apology, it is Zeus, Moira, and the Erinys that send Agamemnon's *atē*, but the speech also employs an elaborate para-narrative in which Agamemnon presents Zeus himself as a fellow sufferer (*Il.* 19.85-138). The external agent of Zeus' *atē* is none other than Atē herself; but if it is only for the purposes of this argument (and its companion in Book 9) that Atē is actually a goddess, to say that one's *atē* was caused by Atē is simply to say that it happened.²⁶ The real cause of Zeus' *atē*, the blindness in which he swears the oath, is Hera, who deceives him. Deception, to be sure, has its source in an external agent, but it is not compulsive – whether one falls for it or not depends on how careful, alert, or sceptical one is at the time.²⁷

²⁵ Cf. e.g. *aidōs Il.* 15.657; *achos Il.* 14.475; 16, 599; *Od.* 21.412; *deos Il.* 4.421; 5.812, 817; 7.479; 8.77; 13.224; 14.387; 15.657-8; 17.67; *Od.* 6.140; 11.43, 633; 12.243; 22.42; 24.450, 533; *phobos Il.* 11.402; 13.470; *cholos Il.* 1.387; 4.23; 8.460; 16.30; 18.322; 20.255; *Od.* 8.304.

²⁶ This remains true regardless of the appearance of the personified *atē* in other contexts, e.g. Hes. *Th.* 224-30; see further Stallmach (1968) 85-92, esp. p.90: "Nach all dem muß man sagen, daß die Gestalt des Daimon Ate ohne feste Umrisse bleibt." Stallmach thus anticipated Dodds (1951) 5: "the two passages which speak of *ate* in personal terms ... are transparent pieces of allegory".

²⁷ On the links between *atē* and *apatē*, see esp. *Il.* 2.111-15; 9.18-22; 10.391-9; 19.95-7. At Hes. *Th.* 224-30 Atē is Apatē's niece. Cf. Stallmach (1968) 40, 44-5; Dodds (1951) 39; Seiler (1954) 416; Mette (1955) 7; Dawe (1968) 100-1; Wyatt (1982) 251;

Agamemnon's case, as he represents it, resembles Zeus' only by means of the metaphor of a goddess called *Atē*; in Zeus' case the metaphor means no more than that on one occasion he let something happen that he would normally have taken steps to prevent, because he was deceived by his wife.²⁸ Agamemnon argues for genuine external (divine) influence in his own case; but his exemplum, de-allegorized, indicates that another model is possible. Equally, if we de-allegorize the parable of the *Litai* in Book 9 (496-514), the *atē* that initially affected Agamemnon and that which Phoenix suggests will affect Achilles if he rejects the Embassy are both endogenous. First, the entreaties that Phoenix and the others make on Agamemnon's behalf are compared to the prayers to the gods made by human beings who "transgress and err" (ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβήη καὶ ἀμάρτη, 501).²⁹ Then, after the allegory, Phoenix proceeds to argue that, in his opinion, the situation would be different if Agamemnon were still acting as provocatively as he did in Book 1 (515-20); in that case, Achilles' persistence in anger would be justified – but now that Agamemnon has offered to make amends, it no longer is (523):

Francis (1983) 81, 108 n.12; Padel (1995) 170, 176, 183, 189. On the influence of popular etymology on the semantics and usage of *atē*, cf. below, nn.101-2.

²⁸ The discrepancy is noticed, in support of very different conclusions, in Müller (1956) 4.

²⁹ It is only in the vehicle of the image that these 'transgressions' are due to the intervention of a goddess called *Atē* (contrast Saïd (1978) 93, 132); in the tenor, transgression and *hamartia* are ways of describing the process of *atē* itself.

“εἰ μὲν γὰρ μὴ δῶρα φέροι τὰ δ' ὄπισθ' ὀνομάζοι

515

Ἀτρεΐδης, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἐπιζαφελῶς χαλεπαῖνοι,

οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγέ σε μῆνιν ἀπορρίψαντα κελοίμην

Ἀργείοισιν ἀμυνέμεναι χατέουσί περ ἔμπης·

νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' αὐτίκα πολλὰ διδοῖ τὰ δ' ὄπισθεν ὑπέστη,

ἄνδρας δὲ λίσσεσθαι ἐπιπροέηκεν ἀρίστους

520

κρινάμενος κατὰ λαὸν Ἀχαιϊκόν, οἳ τε σοὶ αὐτῷ

φίλτατοι Ἀργείων· τῶν μὴ σύ γε μῦθον ἐλέγξης

μηδὲ πόδας· πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.”

Phoenix's argument requires the retention of the regular relation between offence, anger, and reparation – both the anger and the reparation accept that the true origin of the offence lies in the offender. Equally, the point of the warning (that if the Litai are rejected, they will beg Zeus to send Atē against the man who offended them) is that Achilles, if he rejects the embassy, will be making a mistake with potentially disastrous consequences; and this mistake itself would (according to Phoenix) make Achilles a legitimate object of censure (523). We notice that even in allegorical terms, Zeus sends Atē only after the person in question has rejected the Litai. This does not

mean that if Achilles rejects the Embassy he will, at some point in the future, make another mistake with disastrous consequences. Rejecting the Embassy is itself *atē*,³⁰ but it is revealing that even in the allegory the motivation for the crucial mistake comes from within the agent himself. If we think about it, it could not be otherwise, given that Phoenix's aim is precisely to prevent Achilles from making a mistake which it is in Achilles' power to avoid.³¹

The phenomenological passivity of *atē*, together with its quasi-personification, full personification, and attribution to various external agents, all belong with what Dodds (anticipated by Stallmach) rightly saw as its main purpose: to explain how the actions of people who are capable of deliberating well sometimes produce disastrous results. *Atē* has an intrinsic connexion with agency and causality – it explains not just how this could have happened to X, but how X could have performed the action that caused this to happen to him.³² Thus the regret with which *atē* is typically associated is a form of what Bernard Williams calls agent-regret.³³ In that regard, *atē* bears an interesting relation to what psychologists call the Fundamental Attribution Error, the phenomenon by which we tend to regard others' behaviour (especially their faults) as deliberate, typical, and expressive of their overall character (in contrast to our own

³⁰ See Eustathius on *Il.* 19.94, cited by Bremer (1969) 107 n.24, and cf. below [000].

³¹ Thus, in effect, Phoenix's argument is an allegorized version of the earlier warning given by the first speaker, Odysseus, that, if Achilles rejects the ambassadors' appeals, he will come to regret it (9.249-51; cf. below, 000-000 [c. n.68]).

³² See esp. Stallmach (1968) 8; Dodds (1951) 5-6, 13-14.

³³ See Williams (1981); cf. Williams (1993) 69-70.

faults, which we tend to regard as isolated, atypical, and situationally conditioned).³⁴ Appeal to *atē* can be a way of forestalling the kind of whole person judgment that others will tend to make of oneself; by the same token, it can reflect an agent's own bias regarding the disjunction between her unfortunate actions and her overall good character. *Atē* may thus imply the kind of distinction between the evaluation of actions and of agents that finds expression in Aristotle's account of the difference between misfortunes (*atykhēmata*), errors (*hamartēmata*), particular unjust actions (*adikēmata*), and being an unjust person.³⁵ Similar criteria underpin Gabriele Taylor's much more recent account of the differences between remorse, guilt, and shame in terms of their focus on actions alone, on actions as expressive of character, or on the whole self.³⁶ As a means of dissociating one's ill-advised actions from the overall image of the kind of person one wishes to be taken to be, *atē* presupposes at least regret, and might conceivably occur in scenarios which Taylor's schema would categorize under the heading of remorse. It remains to be seen, however, whether *atē* always relies on a distinction between an agent's character and his or her actions, and how far it is a factor that diminishes or reinforces the culpability of either actions or agents.

³⁴ The term was coined by Ross (1977), after Jones and Harris (1967). As far as the asymmetry between first-person and third-person evaluations is concerned, cf. the 'actor-observer' bias proposed by Jones and Nisbett (1971).

³⁵ See *EN* 1135a5-1136a5; cf. *Rhet.* 1368b9-12, 1373b33-8, 1374a9-13, b2-16; also Finkelberg (1995) 27.

³⁶ Taylor (1985) 97-107.

In Homer, it seems that causal responsibility, at least of a contributory nature, is necessary for *atē*. But culpability is another matter. In this regard, a salient fact about the use of *atē* and *aaō* in Homer is that they are much more common in speech than in narrative.³⁷ The instances in the narrative certainly show that the poems' narrators do believe in *atē*; the *Odyssey* narrator also believes that it may have divine origins – he attributes Melampus' *atē* to an Erinys (15.233). None of these cases is wholly exculpatory; one, indeed, is strongly condemnatory (*Il.* 24.28), though this is no doubt embedded focalization (representing the point of view of the three divinities whose hostility to Troy has just been mentioned). In the vast majority of cases, however, we are dealing with the evaluations of speakers, all of which must be interpreted in the light of the particular speaker's motives in the specific context.

One obvious factor is whether a speaker is evaluating his or her own conduct or someone else's. In the *Odyssey* a clear distinction is visible between first- and third-person reference in the usage of the verb: all five cases in which the speaker uses the verb to refer to another party's behaviour are clearly condemnatory, while both instances of the verb with reference to the speaker's own conduct are clearly exculpatory. Odysseus' presentation of himself as a victim of *atē* ("ἄσάν μ'

ἔταροί τε κακοὶ πρὸς τοῖσί τε ὕπνος" , *Odyssey* 10.68) shifts blame as much as possible – not he, but his companions and sleep were responsible for his

³⁷ Noun x17 = 85%, verb x10 = 83% *Il.*; noun x4 = 80% , verb x7 = 100% *Od.*;

average 88%. The occurrences in the narrative are: (noun) *Il.* 16.805; 24.28, 480, *Od.* 15.233; (verb) *Il.* 11.340; 16.685.

misfortune.³⁸ Just so, Elpenor makes fate and wine substantially responsible for his own death ("ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἴσα κακῇ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἶνος" , 11.61). On the other hand, Antinous makes Eurytion fully the author of his own misfortunes (especially 21.297: ὁ δ' ἐπεὶ φρένας ἄασεν οἴνω). Similarly, Menelaus makes it clear that Locrian Ajax's *atē* was reprehensible – the word he spoke under its influence and which led to his ruin was *hyperphialon* (4.503). Antinous' castigation of the *atē* of Eurytion also has one clearly condemnatory use of the noun (21.302). In a second instance (of four in which the noun occurs in speech) the reference is first-person, and clearly exculpatory – the *atē* in question is the result of Odysseus' companions killing and eating the cattle of Helios, but a contributory factor was the mental impairment, i.e. sleep, on Odysseus' part that allowed them to do so; and this Odysseus attributes wholly to the gods (12.371-3). In the other two, the issue is the *atē* of Helen, first in Helen's own words and then in those of Penelope (*Od.* 4.259-64, 23.218-24, both quoted above). If Helen does not, perhaps, wholly exculpate herself (her 'regret' – μετέστενον, 261 – is nicely ambiguous), she does, at least, clearly dissociate herself from the creature who ran off with Paris.³⁹ On the face of it, her evaluation is shared by Penelope in the second passage – only *atē* could have made her do it, and this *atē* came from the gods. Yet in Penelope's version the deed is condemned as *aeikes*, and part of Helen's *atē* was her failure to realize that she might one day be brought back to Greece. This failure contrasts strongly with the

³⁸ On 'blame-shifting' in general, see Scodel (2008) 116-19; cf. Teffeteller (2003) on excuses.

³⁹ Cf. Scodel (2008) 116-17.

characteristic of which Penelope wants to assure Odysseus in this passage – her conviction that Odysseus would return and her determination to ensure that he would have nothing to reproach her for when he did. This, she says, explains her caution when confronted with a man claiming to be her husband – it would be too easy to fall into that delusion. So if the purpose of Helen’s reference to *atē* was to dissociate herself from her past actions, Penelope’s purpose is to dissociate herself from Helen.⁴⁰ And while Penelope is careful to avoid open censure, this is none the less implicit condemnation – Penelope believes herself capable of something that Helen was not, namely fidelity to her husband, despite the temptations which might (were she not more careful than Helen) lead her into error. Though more complex, these two passages broadly confirm the Odyssean split between first-person and third-person perspectives – the third-person case is certainly more condemnatory than the first-person one.

We see examples of the same sort of thing in the *Iliad* – first-person exculpation in Dolon’s claim that Hector led him astray (10.391) and, famously, in Agamemnon’s Apology; third-person condemnation in Achilles’ and Patroclus’ references to Agamemnon’s *atē* (1.412, 16.274) and in Helen’s bitter denunciation of Paris’ (6.356). But the Odyssean pattern is not maintained. One reason for this is that Agamemnon’s self-exculpatory monologue in Book 19 includes a mythological narrative to show that even Zeus was helpless in the face of *atē*; this embeds a number of exculpatory third-person references in an equally exculpatory first-person account. Then there is the simple truth that, though first-person evaluations tend to be less harsh than third-person, it is entirely possible both for speakers to criticize their own

⁴⁰ Cf. Scodel (2008) 116.

actions as harshly or more harshly than others would and for third parties to offer the kinds of excuse that one might advance on one's own behalf. But a more fundamental reason is that the nuances of blame and excuse that we saw in the two Odyssean references to Helen's *atē* are even more subtly exploited in the *Iliad*.

Atē can be used to exculpate, excuse, or mitigate because it facilitates a distinction between a person's enduring character and a single sequence of action that can be represented as the result of a temporary, aberrant state of mind (one that may, but need not, be externally induced). But it does not always do so.⁴¹ At *Il.* 1.244, Achilles predicts that Agamemnon will "tear his *thymos* in anguish that he paid no honour to the best of the Achaeans"; he reformulates this at 1.412 by saying that Agamemnon "will recognize his *atē* in failing to pay honour to the best of the Achaeans" (repeated by Patroclus at 16.274). Both these passages mean no more than that Agamemnon will regret his action when its consequences become obvious.⁴² The failure to honour the best of the Achaeans is the offence that Achilles designates as *anaideiē* (1.149,

⁴¹ Cf. Scodel (2008) 115-16, 119, 148.

⁴² Cf. Stallmach (1968) 57; Lesky (2001) 198.

158, 9.372) and *hybris* (1.203, 9.367-9).⁴³ In using these terms, Achilles means to present Agamemnon's offence both as deliberate wrongdoing and as typical of Agamemnon as a person. *Anaideiē* is a matter of character as well as behaviour;

⁴³ Cf. descriptions of Agamemnon's act as 'just taking' (1.137-8, 161, 184-7, 324-5, 355-6, 506-7; 2.239-40; 9.106-11; 19.88-9), with Allan and Cairns (2011) 115 (cf. 139 nn.8, 14, 143 n.57). For Doyle (1984: 12-13) "What seems particularly noteworthy in [*Il.* 1.411-12 and 16.273-4] is the singular failure of both Achilles and Patroclus to accuse Agamemnon of any guilt. Their preoccupation is totally otherwise: they are concerned with the lack of *τιμή*, and with the consequent shame, which Agamemnon's *ἄτη* brings on Achilles." Finkelberg (1995: 16-17) goes even further in arguing that it is "characteristic" of *atē* that "the agent is not recognized either by himself or by others as an autonomous causer of what he has done" (cf. 27, alleging that agents are not held responsible for actions done under the influence of wine, in so far as these are due to *atē*; but see *Od.* 21.304, discussed in the text above). Her account relies on a claim (1995: 19) that agents (such as Agamemnon and Helen) may be "blamed by themselves and others for their deeds" yet "not seen as responsible for their consequences" that seems to me incoherent. That *atē* always exculpates is implicit also in Wilson (2002), esp. 76, 117-18; an apparent statement to the contrary, that in his reference to his *atai* at *Il.* 9.115-20 "Agamemnon accepts responsibility" (2002: 76), is shown by its immediate sequel ("without accepting liability, or culpability") to be a simple confusion of the accepted senses of the terms 'responsibility' and 'liability'. On the notion that *atē* reflects a Homeric focus on strict liability rather than responsibility, results rather than intentions, cf. n.54 below.

though it issues in acts, it is itself a disposition. And *hybris* is a way of deliberately dishonouring another person that typically springs from an arrogant sense of one's own superiority.⁴⁴ Agamemnon has certainly deliberately dishonoured Achilles; part of his motivation in doing so, moreover, is precisely to demonstrate his own superiority (by his own admission at 1.184-7). Athena's endorsement of Achilles' charge of *hybris* (1.213-14) is wholly warranted. *Qua hybris*, then, Agamemnon's dishonouring of Achilles is deliberate and intentional; *qua atē* it is something he does in ignorance of the consequences. There is no contradiction: Agamemnon intends to dishonour Achilles, but is wrong to imagine that he can do so without harm or loss to himself. Achilles and Patroclus condemn him both for the *hybris* and for the error. In this case, *atē* does not exculpate or mitigate, but rather picks out a significant criterion for blame – thinking that you can do what you like because you think you can get away with it is part of the essence of the offence itself. In calling Agamemnon's action *atē* Achilles does not intend to hand his adversary an opportunity to claim, at a later point, that his action was 'out of character'; rather Achilles represents it as typical.⁴⁵ The point is not that *atē* always distinguishes the act from the agent's settled character, but that it always refers to a single sequence of cause, action, and effect, not to character as such. A character can be prone to *atē* (as Agamemnon in fact is – no fewer than 11 of the *Iliad*'s 20 instances of the noun and 8 of its 12 instances of the

⁴⁴ See Arist. *Rhet.* 1378b23-5, with Fisher (1992) and Cairns (1996).

⁴⁵ See 1.163-71, 225-32, and esp. 343: οὐδέ τι οἶδε νοῆσαι ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω.

verb refer to or are spoken by him);⁴⁶ but *atē* as such refers to a single disastrous mistake.

The ‘apologetic’ function of *atē* comes to the fore in the later stages of the quarrel. After a disastrous performance in open assembly (in which he also speaks of his *atē*, 9.18), Agamemnon is ushered away by Nestor, only to be given a dressing-down for disregarding the rest of the army, ignoring good advice, taking by force and arbitrary *fiat* a prize legitimately awarded, and thereby dishonouring a man whom even the gods honour (9.106-11):

“... ὅτε διογενὲς Βρισηΐδα κούρην
χωομένου Ἀχιλῆος ἔβης κλισίηθεν ἀπούρας
οὔ τι καθ’ ἡμέτερόν γε νόον· μάλα γάρ τοι ἔγωγε
πόλλ’ ἀπεμυθεόμην· σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ
εἷξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἀθάνατοί περ ἔτισαν,

110

ἡτίμησας, ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας.”

Nestor’s charges echo Achilles’ own complaints; and Agamemnon accepts them:

⁴⁶ Cf. Adkins (1982) 307.

“ὦ γέρον οὗ τι ψεῦδος ἐμὰς ἄτας κατέλεξας·

115

ἄσάμην, οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι. ἀντί νυ πολλῶν

λαῶν ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ ὃν τε Ζεὺς κῆρι φιλήσῃ,

ὥς νῦν τοῦτον ἔτισε, δάμασσε δὲ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν.

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄσάμην φρεσὶ λευγαλέῃσι πιθήσας,

ἄψ ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι δόμεναί τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα.”

120

Achilles is honoured by Zeus, and so (Agamemnon now recognizes, in contrast to his attitude in Book 1) of indispensable value to the Achaean army (116-18). Agamemnon's offer to make amends (120) further accepts that he was in the wrong.⁴⁷

His offence was *atē* – indeed it was a catalogue of *atai* (οὗ τι ψεῦδος ἐμὰς ἄτας κατέλεξας 115). It is the *atē* as such that demands the reparation (119-20), and not only does Agamemnon accept full and sole responsibility for this *atē* (in succumbing to it he was persuaded by his own “baneful wits”, 119), he also accepts that it makes him a legitimate target of blame – “not even I deny it” (115-16) – if *atē* were to

⁴⁷ On the importance of this point, see Donlan (1993) 161; Scodel (2008) 102-3; Cairns (2011) [000].

exculpate, the question of denial would not even arise.⁴⁸ There is indeed an element of self-distancing in Agamemnon's response – now that his act has proved disastrous, he regards it as an aberration, something that is not a feature of his settled character – but there is no evasion of either blame or responsibility; Agamemnon is chastened by Nestor's criticism, and accepts that it is valid. His confession of a catalogue of *atai*, though it may well involve a sardonic reference to the force of Nestor's criticism, is in fact relatively strong self-reproach.

Phoenix also presents Agamemnon's offer as a recognition of fault in his allegory of the Litai. Again, a basic point to remember is that a man who offers recompense accepts that *he* has caused an offence that *he* must now make good. When Phoenix presents the Embassy as the work of Litai, he confirms this: entreaty is the act of a person who "transgresses and errs" (501); and anger at such a person is justified (523). The element of tact in Phoenix's presentation lies first in the fact that *atē* in this case makes the act venial – Agamemnon has recognized and repudiated a one-off mistake that is not a true reflection of his character – and second in the way that the personification of both *Atē* and the Litai generalizes the quarrel and avoids specific reference to Agamemnon. This is the kind of self-distancing that needs to be present in any effective form of apology: we do not accept amends from people who say "I meant it, I stand by it, and I'd do it again" – anyone who wishes to make amends and thereby to repair a relationship has to look both to the past (the offence was his, but not the sort of thing that he habitually does) and to the future (because the offence was an aberration there is reason to believe that the offender and the victim will be able to co-operate once more); in both directions the agent has to present him- or

⁴⁸ Cf. Stallmach (1968) 56-7.

herself as a responsible one, capable of reliable co-operation.⁴⁹ This, moreover, is the kind of construction that Achilles needs to accept if the quarrel is to end – Agamemnon must be allowed to retain some face if the two are ever to co-operate again.⁵⁰

Things have changed by Book 19. Achilles has decided to return to battle for his own reasons and in his eagerness to re-enter the fray has virtually shared the blame for what he represents as a trivial dispute with disastrous consequences, something that should never have happened.⁵¹ Agamemnon, therefore, no longer needs to be particularly contrite; but he has been wounded, and his authority risks being undermined by the boost to morale given by Achilles' return and the widespread criticism of his own conduct that he refers to at the beginning of his speech. Therefore he uses *atē* to maximize the distance between himself and his act in dishonouring Achilles – everyone is blaming him, he says, but he is not to blame. *Atē* is irresistible, and affects even Zeus. (But still he will make amends.)⁵²

⁴⁹ See Scodel (2008) 115 (and cf. p.95).

⁵⁰ Scodel (2008) 117-24.

⁵¹ See 19.56-73, 270-4, with Scodel (2008) 117-18, 122-3. On the issue of sharing the blame and sharing the *atē* in 19.270-4 cf. below [000].

⁵² NB the dissonance between the imperfect logic of 19.137-8 ("since Zeus took away my wits, I am willing to make amends") and the logical sequence of 9.119-20 ("since I trusted in my baneful wits, I am willing to make amends"), and cf. Taplin (1992) 207-9; Cairns (2011) [000]. There is a similar dissonance between Agamemnon's claim that his *atē* exculpates at 19.85-9 and his use in line 89 of a phrase (Ἀχιλλῆος

Achilles accepts Agamemnon's self-exculpation (270-4, quoted and discussed below), but Odysseus does not. Instead, he issues a firm warning that Agamemnon, who started the quarrel, must be more just in future (19.181-3):

“Ἄτρεΐδῃ σὺ δ' ἔπειτα δικαιότερος καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλῳ

ἔσσειαι. οὐ μὲν γάρ τι νεμεσσητὸν βασιλῆα

ἄνδρ' ἀπαρέσσασθαι ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήνῃ.”

This is clearly incompatible with Agamemnon's explanation, for such a warning can focus only on what is in the agent's power.⁵³ Odysseus insists that Agamemnon must acknowledge his fault (that he started the quarrel) and implies moreover that the sensitivity to popular disapproval which motivated Agamemnon's attempt to save face (85-6) is misplaced when gratuitous offence has been given and reparation is called for.

γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπηύρων) of a type that is elsewhere used to condemn his

gratuitous offence (see 1.137-8, 161, 184-7, 324-5, 355-6, 506-7; 2.239-40; 9.107;

16.58, with Teffeteller (1990); cf. Scodel (2003) 276-8; Allan and Cairns (2011) 115).

⁵³ Cf. Cairns (2001b) 18 n.54; contrast Stallmach (1968) 34-5, who notes only

Achilles' endorsement at 270-4; so also Erbse (1984) 212.

Discussions of *atē* as an exhibit in the historiography of ideas typically start from Agamemnon's 'Apology', which is often used to 'prove' that the *Iliad* lacks a 'satisfactory' notion of 'moral responsibility', restricting itself to a focus on strict liability, because this is a world in which results matter much more than intentions.⁵⁴ To use this passage as a paradigm, however, is to look through the wrong end of the telescope.⁵⁵ Agamemnon gives us only a partial interpretation that is contradicted in context and that contrasts with other (partial) explanations given elsewhere. The important lesson of Agamemnon's Apology is not that the Homeric notion of responsibility is exotic and undeveloped,⁵⁶ but that the notion of *atē* is open to rhetorical manipulation to suit a speaker's aims in context, and that its implications in terms of characters' responsibility for their actions are not a matter of fixed orthodoxy. As evidence for the Homeric conception of responsible human action Agamemnon's Apology, and indeed the presentation of *atē* in Homer in general, demonstrate quite the opposite of what is commonly supposed. Though, as an account of the operation of *atē*, Agamemnon's Apology is idiosyncratic in several respects, it resembles a large number of other passages in advancing *atē* as an explanation for

⁵⁴ See Latte (1920/1) 254 = (1968) 3; Stallmach (1968) 9, 13-14, 34, 97-101; Dodds (1951) 3; Adkins (1960) 51-2; Bremer (1969) 106, 108; Gagarin (1976) 6-11; Wyatt (1982) 258; Finkelberg (1995) 16-17.

⁵⁵ So Williams (1993) 52.

⁵⁶ For the "basic elements of any conception of responsibility" in Homer, see Williams (1993) 55, and cf. 64-70 on the potential focus of regret (for us as in Homer) on results for which one is held accountable but which are also in some way unintended.

exceptional behaviour.⁵⁷ Agamemnon is not arguing that he is *never* responsible (much less that *no one* is ever responsible), but that in *this* situation, in which others are blaming him as the cause (*aitios*) of their misfortunes, there are special circumstances which mean that he should not be blamed. Agamemnon adopts this tactic precisely because he knows that he is likely to be held to account for past actions and that he needs to present himself as someone whom Achilles and others can trust in future. This is a point that is forcefully underlined in Odysseus' warning that Agamemnon, king though he is, must be more just from now on (19.181-3). Such an emphatic statement of his responsibility for his actions, of his liability, in spite of his rank, to be blamed when he has acted wrongly, draws a line under the quarrel that marks out the point from which Agamemnon can begin to recover some of the authority that he has lost.⁵⁸ Similarly, though it is exculpatory where Odysseus' evaluation is condemnatory, the scope of Agamemnon's explanation in terms of *atē* is strictly limited to his need for a story that saves a degree not merely of face but of his integrity as a responsible social interactant, and in particular as a leader capable both of commanding the confidence of his followers and of receiving the credit for his successes. If this role is to be maintained, then Agamemnon's behaviour towards

⁵⁷ Cf. Scodel (2008) 115.

⁵⁸ Odysseus is equally emphatic on Agamemnon's liability to legitimate censure in questioning his fitness to command, at what may be Agamemnon's lowest ebb, in Book 14 (82-102). Similarly, Poseidon (in the guise of Calchas) affects to give voice to the sentiments of the army as a whole in censuring the 'inadequacy' (*kakotēs*, 108) of their king, responsible (*aitios*) for their current plight on account of his offence against Achilles (111-13). This is a manifestation of the widespread censure to which Agamemnon reveals his sensitivity at 14.49-50 and 19.85-6.

Achilles has to be an aberration. His speech implies not an imperfect but rather a robust notion of responsibility for one's actions. Far from threatening the coherence of the Homeric conception of responsibility, it is, in fact, a move in a game in which such coherence is essential.⁵⁹

In Book 19, Agamemnon intends his Apology to exculpate. In that respect, signs in the speech itself and in its reception indicate failure. As a strategy to move on from the quarrel, however, distancing Agamemnon from his actions and placing his estrangement from Achilles firmly in the past, the speech fulfils a political function that is not dependent upon its persuasiveness as an attempt to evade responsibility. The link that the Apology presupposes between *atē* and a robust notion of responsibility in all normal circumstances is maintained both when *atē* is advanced as a mitigating factor and when it is presented as an aggravating factor. In Book 9, Agamemnon himself accepts responsibility (not just liability, but the blame that Nestor has just enunciated) for an action which, while to some degree 'out of character', is none the less his, and one for which he must make amends. In Book 1, Achilles uses his reference to Agamemnon's *atē* to present him as a deliberate and serial offender who on this occasion miscalculates in thinking that he can offend without consequence; this culpable error itself belongs with a characteristic failure to deliberate effectively. Agamemnon's *atē*, according to Achilles, compounds and contributes to his moral offence as a culpable form of oversight to which Agamemnon is prone. His failure to project himself into the future, to foresee the consequences of

⁵⁹ On the need for a robust notion of responsibility (and hence to resist "creeping exculpation") as the price of admission to "the games one gets to play if one is a citizen in good standing" cf. Dennett (2003) 292.

his actions, is a typical one for which, Achilles believes, Agamemnon will bear full responsibility once the consequences of his actions become apparent (1.240-4, 338-44, 410-12). In its subjective sense, as a state of mind that leads to an objectively disastrous state of affairs, *atē* is indeed a form of ignorance or negligence, but for Homer's characters as for us such negligence may be more or less culpable.⁶⁰ *Atē* explains errors both in and out of character. Both types of error rest on the notion of a temporally extended self with both a future and a past, whose acts have consequences both foreseen and unforeseen, and who is answerable to others both for particular actions and for the motivations from which they derive.

In addition, though attribution of the harm caused by *atē* to external and especially divine sources can be used to exculpate or mitigate, the notion of the goddess *Atē* herself or of gods who send *atē* presupposes a fundamental concept of responsible, effective human agency.⁶¹ In these cases, when the results of an action prove to be at variance with the intentions of the person who performed it, those results are attributed to a personality of another kind, an agent with a different agenda. The behaviour of the anthropomorphic Homeric gods is created on the model of effective human agency. Thus (*pace* Stallmach (1968) 96, and a host of scholars of that ilk) there is in the Homeric poems no trace of a primitive stage at which the basic notion of agency and its implications are not understood. Explanations of phenomena such as *atē* as *originally* supernatural are unintelligible. Though the attribution of forms of action and causation to personified forces creates an arena in which there may be, arguably and to varying degrees, aspects of human action that can be regarded as

⁶⁰ Cf. Stallmach (1968) 93, 96; Dawe (1968) 107; Stinton (1975) 244-5.

⁶¹ Cf. Williams (1993) 31, 33; Teffeteller (2003) 31.

having extra-human causes, the very concept of anthropomorphic gods as effective doers of deeds is logically and temporally posterior to a perfectly ordinary conception of human beings as source and effective cause of their actions. If anything, the notion of personal agency has an even more powerful grip on the presentation of causality in the Homeric poems than it does on our own ways of thinking about the subject.

Atē is a major theme in the *Iliad*.⁶² It has its role to play in the causation of the war itself, in so far as Paris' abduction of Helen is described in its terms.⁶³ It is in the poem's central theme, however, namely the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon and its consequences, that it plays its most prominent role, as is clear both from the sheer number of passages in which it is associated with Agamemnon's behaviour and from the thematic salience of the two passages in which the concept is allegorized and personified in Books 9 and 19. But if the quarrel and its resolution turn to a great extent upon the issue of Agamemnon's *atē*, then the *atē*-theme will have inevitable implications for the presentation of Achilles.⁶⁴ The possibility of an intersection between Agamemnon's and Achilles' *atē* is (as I have already noted) clearly emphasized in Phoenix's allegory of the *Litai*, but since there has been occasional

⁶² Cf. Neuburg (1993) 491; Finkelberg (1995) 25.

⁶³ *Il.* 6.356; 24.28; possibly also 3.100; cf. n.22 above.

⁶⁴ The association of *atē* with Achilles is central to the thesis of Yamagata (2005), which is valuable in highlighting how the *atē* of other characters reflects their relations with him; but I cannot follow her in her claim that it is as agent and author of *atē* in others, "almost like the goddess Ate herself" (p.22), that Achilles embodies the theme. This seems to me to involve a substantial misinterpretation (see her pp.22-3) of the rhetorical purpose of Phoenix's allegory of the *Litai*.

disagreement both about the import of the allegory itself and the extent to which the prospect of *atē* in Achilles' case is realized in the ensuing narrative, it is necessary to justify this impression at slightly greater length. First, as we have noted more than once above, it is clear that the initial point of Phoenix's allegory is to present Agamemnon's gifts as atonement for the offence committed in Book 1: the gods themselves are swayed by gifts and prayer, when a human being "transgresses and errs" (497-501); *a fortiori* Achilles too should subdue his anger (496-7). Atē (sc. Agamemnon's offence) comes first, but the Litai (sc. the ambassadors and their message regarding Agamemnon's readiness to make amends) come after to undo the damage she has caused (502-7). Since Achilles has already predicted that Agamemnon will regret his *atē* (1.411-12), and Agamemnon has already accepted that it was *atē* to dishonour Achilles (9.115-20), there can, *pace* Yamagata, be no question of the allegorized Atē, strong and swift-footed though she is, standing primarily for Achilles' conduct in Book 1 *rather than* Agamemnon's.⁶⁵ The next stage of Phoenix's argument, also noted above, is to suggest that rejection of Agamemnon's offer could be as big an error as Agamemnon's original offence, something that Achilles will come to regret as much as Agamemnon, it is implied, now regrets his behaviour in Book 1 (508-14). These two points, the retrospective and the prospective, are then explicitly applied to Achilles' case in the sequel (513ff.). Achilles is urged to grant

⁶⁵ Since Phoenix goes on to warn Achilles of *atē* on his own part, one might wish to see the (genuine) similarity between Achilles and Ate as an implicit and proleptic warning that Achilles' propensity may be for the *atē* of continued intransigence rather than for the *aidōs* that the ambassadors' appeal demands. But since the warning that Achilles may bring *atē* upon himself is in any case clear, its reinforcement *via* an implicit comparison between Achilles and Ate adds nothing.

the Litai, the daughters of Zeus, the honour they deserve (513-14) – thus he is explicitly identified as the one who will benefit from acceptance of the Litai and be harmed, through Atē, if he rejects them, as in the allegory at 508-12.⁶⁶ Agamemnon was the original offender (were he still behaving as he did in Book 1, says Phoenix at 515-18, then he, Phoenix, would not be asking Achilles to abandon his anger at the original offence); but now he is making amends (515, 519) and has sent men to entreat on his behalf (520-2: note λίσσεσθαι in 520, picking up 501, 502, and 511), and so anger is no longer appropriate; Achilles should honour his friends, whom Agamemnon has entrusted with his entreaties, or risk indignation (*nemesis*, i.e. blame) if he does not (522-3); the Meleager paradigm then gives an example of a hero whose persistence in anger came at a cost to himself (524-99), a risk that also attends Achilles, if it should turn out that he has to fight and fight well, but forfeit esteem in the eyes of his fellows (600-5).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See nn.10-11, 29-31 above.

⁶⁷ The anonymous reader for *PLLS* acutely points out that, in responding to this last element of Phoenix's warning, Achilles makes the same mistake as Agamemnon in Book 1: he imagines that he can do without the esteem of the Achaeans and rely instead upon the honour granted him by Zeus (9.607-10; cf. Agamemnon at 1.174-5). Each thinks that he knows the mind of Zeus and is confident that his actions will achieve the outcome he desires; this confidence leads each to subordinate others to his own ends; and in each case such confidence is shown to be misplaced, at variance with Zeus' actual purposes.

In essence, Phoenix's argument is similar to Odysseus': Odysseus also accepts that Achilles has a grievance (for such is the implication of his reference to Achilles' *cholos* at 259-61 and 299), but holds that Agamemnon's gifts are enough to assuage it (259-99). But like Phoenix, he also stresses that Achilles has other reasons for returning to the fray, reasons to do with his loyalty to his comrades (230-1, 247-8, 300-6);⁶⁸ if Achilles neglects this consideration, he argues, he may live to regret it (249-51):

“αὐτῷ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἔσσεται, οὐδέ τι μῆχος

ῥεχθέντος κακοῦ ἔστ' ἄκος εὐρεῖν· ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρὶν

φράζευ ὅπως Δαναοῖσιν ἀλεξήσεις κακὸν ἥμαρ.”

There are thus plenty of indications in *Iliad* 9 that rejection of the Embassy is something that Achilles will come to regret. The Meleager paradigm is in one sense a case of misdirection (Achilles' regret will not in the end focus on the loss of the gifts he was promised), but the suggestion that Achilles will rue his failure to respond to the claims of friendship is there in both Phoenix's speech and Odysseus'. Phoenix, moreover, makes it clear that this regret will be, as Homeric regret often is, the result of *atē*. The point is, the audience already know that Achilles will not be persuaded to return to battle by the appeals addressed to him during the night narrated in Book 9. Hector's success will continue on the next day, and will last until battle reaches the sterns of the Achaean ships, Patroclus is slain, and Achilles returns to the fray, as

⁶⁸ A point, of course, that is also emphasized by Ajax (630-42).

prophesied by Zeus at 8.470-7. This is the background against which we hear Book 9's warnings that Achilles will regret his persistence in anger; this prophecy provides a basis on which to interpret the prophetic orientation of Book 9 – not just Odysseus' warning of *achos* to come (249), and not just Phoenix's warning that Achilles may become subject to *atē*, but also the often-noted correspondence between the 'scale of affection' in the appeals of Meleager's *philoī* and the sequence in Achilles' own case, culminating in Book 16 with the appeal of Patroclus (as the appeals of Meleager's *philoī* culminate in that of Cleopatra).⁶⁹ Ultimately, then, the error that Achilles will regret is the refusal to return to battle and the decision to allow Patroclus to go in his stead. The error involved in the latter course of action is underlined by Zeus' second prophecy of Patroclus' death (and its consequences) at 15.64-71.⁷⁰ The latter

⁶⁹ See Kakridis (1949) 19-25, 28-34, 39, 49-53, 159-64. On the names (Patro-klos and Kleo-patra) see Willcock (2001) 449 n.31; Alden (2000) 239-40 (each with references to earlier discussions).

⁷⁰ On ancient scholars' doubts about the two prophecies and their minor misdirections, see Kirk (1990) 334 on 8.475-6 and Janko (1992) 234-5 on 15.56-77; for an analysis in narratological terms, see Morrison (1992) 78-83, 92, 123. For Yamagata (1991) 14 = (1994) 59 Achilles' *atē* cannot be a cause of Patroclus' death, because "Everything is pre-ordained, including the death of Patroclus before Achilles'. Whatever Achilles does, his loss of Patroclus is inevitable." Equally, one might say, whatever Patroclus does (at the height of his success in Book 16) his death is inevitable; this, indeed, is the point of 16.688-91; yet in the same passage (at 685-6) Patroclus is characterized as *nēpios* for the error (μέγ' ἁόσθη) that leads to his death. We note, too, that where the plan of Zeus plays a role in Achilles' acceptance

prophecy prepares for the fatal step that Achilles takes in Book 16, and his pathetic inability to foresee the results of his actions is underlined by Zeus' refusal to grant his prayer for Patroclus' safety at 16.233-52 and his own deluded wish that he and Patroclus should alone take Troy (16.97-100). Achilles' own lack of insight in sending Patroclus into battle, as well as Patroclus' error in disregarding Achilles' instructions, are both emphasized when Achilles, concluding (correctly as it turns out and as the audience already knows) that Hector's rout of the Achaean forces means that Patroclus is dead, remembers a prophecy from his mother that Patroclus' death would occur, at the hands of the Trojans, before his own (18.6-14): Patroclus was *schetlios* in ignoring Achilles' advice (13-14), but Achilles himself had reason to guard against such an outcome.⁷¹ In this sequence, because we know that the result of the agent's actions will be very different from what he intends, we see *atē* in action. That the result of Achilles' *atē* is the death of Patroclus is further emphasized by the use of the term itself with reference first to the blind, Zeus-inspired fury which leads

of Agamemnon's Apology at 19.270-4, it does not figure at all in his grief and regret over his failure to protect Patroclus at 18.80-2, 90-3, 98-116. Neither the characters nor the narrative support the kind of absolute fatalism to which Yamagata appeals.

⁷¹ In retrospect, therefore, Achilles' failure to remember the prophecy in urging Patroclus not to attack Troy (16.87-96) is also latent at 17.401-11, where the narrator 'cuts' from the fighting over Patroclus' body to the waiting Achilles, who did not expect Patroclus to attempt to sack the city and still expects to see him return alive. On this and the other expressions of Achilles' unfulfilled hopes for Patroclus, see Edwards (1991) 101-2 on 17.404-11; Rutherford (2001) 280; on the prophecy referred to at 18.6-15 and its relation to 17.404-11, cf. Edwards (1991) 142-3 on 18.8-11 and Rutherford (2001) 282 and n.54.

Patroclus (at 16.684-91) to ignore Achilles' command (of 16.87-96) not to proceed against Troy, and then to the bewilderment that seizes him as he is overcome by his assailants (805).⁷² Some object that the *atē* of Patroclus cannot fulfil a warning that *atē* will overtake Achilles;⁷³ but (a) the fates of Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles himself form a sequence linked by an extensive series of parallels, foreshadowings, and prophecies;⁷⁴ (b) Patroclus is a surrogate Achilles who enters battle in Achilles' own armour; and (c) as we see explicitly in the allegory of the *Litai*, *atē* is (for the purposes of this narrative sequence at least) transferable.⁷⁵ We see the coming

⁷² Cf. his ignorance of what is to come when he (in his folly, μέγα νήπιος, 16.46-7: cf. 685-6) appeals for a favour that will bring his own death. On *nēpios* and *atē*, cf. below [000] and n.84.

⁷³ See Adkins (1982) 308; Yamagata (1991) 14 = (1994) 59; Van Wees (1992) 135; Alden (2000) 203; but contrast Alden (2000) 261-2, where she is more open to the idea that Achilles' actions in the approach to Patroclus' death do fulfil Phoenix's warning against *atē*. In accepting that Achilles' actions do lead to the *atē* of Patroclus, Yamagata (2005) 24 somewhat undermines the position of her earlier analysis (which she none the less defends at (2005) 21-2): given that Achilles cannot possibly intend his friend's death, there is no way to avoid the conclusion that the contribution that his actions make to that outcome results from the disastrous error against which he was warned in Book 9.

⁷⁴ See below, [000 at n.79].

⁷⁵ This is denied by Alden (2000) 203: but if the text insists that "the refuser of Λιταί and the one dogged by Ἄτη will be the same person", it likewise insists that the *atē*

together of Achilles' *atē* with that of Patroclus when Achilles himself expresses the fear that Patroclus' misjudgement may have brought about an eventuality against which he himself had been warned (18.6-14 again).

In any event, the clear indications that the rejection of the Embassy is an error whose consequences (compounded by further errors) encompass the death of Patroclus is matched by equally clear indications of Achilles' regret once those consequences are known. One need not get into a debate over precisely how to label, in Greek or in English, the emotions expressed by Achilles over the death of Patroclus in Book 18 to recognize (a) his awareness that his prayer for the defeat of the Achaeans in Book 1 has had disastrous consequences that he did not foresee (note the emphasis on the fulfilment of the prayer of Book 1 in Thetis' questions and Achilles' response at 18.73-82), (b) his wish that Patroclus had not died (80-2), and (c) his self-reproach for his failure to keep Patroclus and his other comrades safe (98-106). He clearly regrets the original quarrel and the anger that it provoked in him (107-11), anger that the audience knows to have been crucial not just in his original withdrawal but also in his refusal to be reconciled.⁷⁶ The death of Patroclus brings all this home to him, and it is

that afflicted the original offender may pass to the one who refuses that offender's reparation.

⁷⁶ Contrast Yamagata (1994) 59-60, esp. p.60 (and cf. ead. (1991) 14-15): Achilles "never says, 'I am sorry that I became angry.' His logic is 'I am sorry that he angered me' (18.111)." But his own anger at Agamemnon is clearly something that Achilles regrets (18.107-10): it is a seductive emotion that overcomes one's better judgement (ὄς τ' ἐφάρκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι, 108), and he wishes that it would

the death of Patroclus that is advertised by Zeus in Book 8 as the consequence of his refusal to return to battle until Hector takes the fighting to the Achaean ships. This is surely the damage by which he pays for his rejection of the *Litai* (βλαφθεῖς ἀποτίση, 9.512), the disastrous result of the error of which he is warned in Book 9.

Similar regrets are apparent in Book 19: the quarrel was futile, its object a mere girl who should rather have died on the day of her capture; it benefited only Hector and the Trojans, and caused many Achaean deaths (19.56-63). Because Achilles now wishes the quarrel had not happened at all and because his regrets encompass the sufferings of the Achaeans in general (18.102-3, 19.61-2), it appears that his delusion began not in Book 9, but in Book 1, when he imagined that their destruction would achieve all that he desired, including the demonstration of Agamemnon's *atē* (1.408-12, cf. 240-4). In retrospect, it seems to be at that point rather than later that the *atai* of Achilles and Agamemnon begin to intertwine. That they are intertwined is further suggested by Achilles' endorsement of Agamemnon's Apology in Book 19 (270-4):

“Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ μεγάλας ἄτας ἄνδρεςσι διδοῖσθα·

οὐκ ἂν δὴ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι ἐμοῖσιν

Ἀτρεΐδης ὥρινε διαμπερές, οὐδέ κε κούρην

ἦγεν ἐμεῦ ἀέκοντος ἀμήχανος· ἀλλὰ ποθὶ Ζεὺς

ἦθελ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν θάνατον πολέεσσι γενέσθαι.”

vanish from the world, a hyperbolic way of saying that he wishes it had not overwhelmed him.

Whether or not Achilles is represented here as meaning to acknowledge that *atē* lay behind his anger as well as Agamemnon's provocation,⁷⁷ the lines clearly do raise the issue of his own contribution to the disastrous consequences of the quarrel, for the deaths of many Achaeans were not merely an eventuality that Zeus somehow decided to bring about but an end actively desired by Achilles himself in which he enlisted Zeus' support. That this desire was a mistake with disastrous consequences is the burden of the allegory of the *Litai* in Book 9 and of Achilles' regrets in Books 18 and 19. As does Agamemnon in his Apology, here at 19.273-4 Achilles attributes his own error to divine purpose, and the resort to exculpatory mythology is as transparently self-serving in the one case as it is in the other; the use of the plurals ἄτῳς and ἄνδρεςσιν in line 270 facilitates the conclusion that Achilles is as much a victim of *atē* as his erstwhile adversary. Scholars' refusal to accept that conclusion rests on an unrealistically positivist demand that a scenario typically described in terms of a certain concept should be labelled with the appropriate term on every occurrence and at every stage. In the case of Achilles' actions from Books 1 to 19, not only is there enough of the *atē*-scenario in the narrative to be identified by any audience capable of thinking for itself, but the central importance of the theme is emphasized by the use of the actual term in one of the most salient passages in the development of the quarrel

⁷⁷ So Scodel (2008) 123; cf. Lloyd-Jones (1971/1983) 23 and contrast Adkins (1982) 308; Finkelberg (1995) 23 n.34. The extent to which, in 19.56-66, Achilles has shared responsibility for the quarrel and its consequences in fact makes it rather likely that he means to share the *atē* in 270-4.

and kept before us in subsequent occurrences of the term as the sequence reaches its conclusion in Books 16 and 19.⁷⁸

Thus the quarrel of Book 1 constitutes the beginning of a sequence of events that involves *atē* on the part of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Patroclus. *Atē* plays a pivotal role (especially in the Embassy of Book 9) in the process by which the ‘anger of Achilles’ theme is linked to the ‘Troy’ theme, with its focus on the death of Hector and, ultimately, the fall of his city. The episodes of Patroclus’ killing of Sarpedon, Hector’s killing of Patroclus, Achilles’ killing of Hector, and (beyond the poem’s end) Paris’ killing of Achilles are linked by a series of cross-references, prophecies, foreshadowings, and thematic parallels.⁷⁹ In this sequence the *atē* of Achilles plays a crucial causal role – its consequence is Patroclus’ death and it is reflected in Patroclus’ own *atē* in the lead-up to his death. Behind Achilles’ *atē* is that of Agamemnon, and behind the entire *fabula* of the Trojan War is the *atē* of Paris. The final stage of this grand sequence to be narrated (rather than merely foreshadowed) in the *Iliad* is the death of Hector. But the term *atē* is never used of Hector, and there are

⁷⁸ For this general interpretation, see Bremer (1969) 106-7; Wyatt (1982) 254-6, 259-60; Thornton (1984) 119, 123, 132, 135-6; Arieti (1988), esp. 5, 10; contrast Adkins (1982) 307-8; Edwards (1991) 267 on 19.270-5; Yamagata (1991) 13-15; (1994) 57-60 (cf. (2005) 21); Wilson (2002) 100.

⁷⁹ See esp. 15.59-77, 596-614; 16.644-55, 794-800, 844-61; 17.194-7, 201-8; 18.79-116; 22.358-66 (esp. comparing 22.361-6 with 16.855-61), with Rutherford (2001) 276-85; cf. Thornton (1984) 125-42; Edwards (1991) 7-10; Richardson (1993) 17-19.

some who would argue that he is free of that affliction, despite its prominence in the sequence which links him to Achilles and Patroclus.⁸⁰

The case for regarding Hector as a victim of *atē*, however, is strong. Partly, it rests on the reflection of the paradigmatic scenario of *atē* in his actions from Book 8 to Book 22. First, Hector's success (in Books 8 and 11-18) is explicitly circumscribed: it is strictly instrumental to Zeus' plan to bring honour to Achilles, and its limit is defined by the latter's absence from battle. Zeus provokes Hera by informing her that the change in the fortunes of the Trojans that is the subject of Book 8 will be sustained on the following day (i.e. Books 11-18), until Patroclus is killed and Achilles returns to the fray (8.470-7). In Book 11, Zeus sends Iris to Hector with the explicit message that his success will end with the setting of the sun on that day (11.192-4=207-9). He repeats these terms in Book 17 (453-5). But Hector becomes elated by his success: the turn in the tide of battle in Book 8 leads him to hope that the Achaeans can be driven from Troy; he predicts that, on the following day, he will kill Diomedes; and he utters the impossible wish that he might be deathless and ageless, honoured as Athena and Apollo are honoured, as surely as that day will bring evil to the Argives (8.525-41). In Book 13 he predicts that he will kill Ajax, and again wishes that he might be honoured like a god, son of Zeus and Hera, equal of Apollo and Athena, as surely as the present day brings evil to the Argives (824-32). In both cases, his confidence is proved false: when he does encounter Diomedes, the latter knocks him unconscious

⁸⁰ See Finkelberg (1995) 24; cf. Stallmach (1968) 58 n.80; contrast Bremer (1969)

104-5. On Hector's part in the sequence, especially his delusion and his error, see further Redfield (1975/1994) 136-59; Mueller (1984) 36-43, 60-4; Rutherford (2001) 283-4.

(11.349-67); and he has to be rescued by his comrades after Ajax has knocked him to the ground with a stone (14.402-32). In both these passages, while one might say that the wishes to which he gives voice are merely *adynata*, implying no genuine aspiration towards divinity, still the form of expression, juxtaposing the permanent glory of the gods and the present day of Trojan success, effectively underlines his tendency to extrapolate from the temporary ascendancy that has been promised him to something far beyond his capabilities.

Hector's over-confidence on his 'big day' of success is highlighted by the contrast with the prudence of Polydamas.⁸¹ Polydamas' credentials as a counsellor are established on his first appearance (12.60ff.), and the main function of his advice is to demonstrate Hector's failure to remember that his ascendancy is circumscribed and temporary (12.200-50; 18.243-313). With Achilles' reappearance on the field of battle and the setting of the sun in Book 18, the day of success promised by Zeus is over, yet Hector is convinced that divine favour will continue (18.293-5) and rejects Polydamas' advice to return within the walls (284-309).⁸² Polydamas' advice is prefaced by the narrator's approval (249-52) and the Trojans are condemned as fools, *nēpioi*, for disregarding it (310-13) – Athena had taken away their wits (311). By Book 22, Hector has realized his mistake (99-110):

⁸¹ On Polydamas and Hector, see now Clark (2007), building on Redfield (1975/1994).

⁸² A misplaced confidence that the human agent's ends coincide with and are endorsed by the will of Zeus thus unites the *atē* of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Hector (see especially 12.233-42, 18.293-5 and cf. n.67 above).

“ὦ μοι ἐγών, εἰ μὲν κε πύλας καὶ τείχεα δύω,
 Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει, 100
 ὅς μ’ ἐκέλευε Τρωσὶ ποτὶ πτόλιν ἡγήσασθαι
 νύχθ’ ὑπο τήνδ’ ὅλοῃν ὅτε τ’ ὤρετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
 ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἦ τ’ ἄν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν.
 νῦν δ’ ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν,
 αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους, 105
 μή ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο·
 Ἔκτωρ ἦφι βίῃφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.
 ὣς ἐρέουσιν· ἐμοὶ δὲ τότε’ ἄν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη
 ἄντην ἢ Ἀχιλῆα κατακτείναντα νέεσθαι,
 ἥέ κεν αὐτῷ ὀλέσθαι ἐὺκλειῶς πρὸ πόληος.” 110

From Hector’s point of view, the results of ignoring Polydamas’ advice have been disastrous and he now regrets doing so: he has failed to achieve his purpose and instead put his city and his people in danger. The term that he uses of his own conduct, however, is not *atē* but *atasthaliē*.

The fullest case for a systematic distinction between *atē* and *atasthaliē* is made by Margalit Finkelberg (1995). According to her, they differ in that in *atē* but not in *atasthaliē* “the agent is not recognized either by himself or by others as an autonomous causer of what he has done” (1995: 16-17); *atē* involves acting in ignorance of the consequences, whereas those who are subject to *atasthaliē* know or are at least “aware of the possibility that the course of action they were taking could result in disaster” (1995: 18), because, unlike *atē*, *atasthaliē* involves ignoring advice or warnings (1995: 17-21). Hence “*ate* usually comes from the outside, [but] *atasthaliē* is always man’s own” (1995: 20), and “while *ate* presupposes an error which originates in the irrational, *atasthaliē* presupposes an error originating in the rational” (1995: 21).

None of these differentiae will suffice to draw an absolute distinction between *atē* and *atasthaliē*. We have seen already that not all *atē* is exogenous. Equally, someone who acts under the influence of *atē* can be “recognized ... as the autonomous causer of what he has done”, at least if that means that the person is regarded as the responsible origin of his or her actions – Achilles’ accusation of *atē* against Agamemnon at *Iliad* 1.412 is, as we saw, blame, not exculpation, and Agamemnon used the same word in accepting responsibility for the consequences of his actions in Book 9 (115-20).⁸³ At the point at which Agamemnon makes the error to which these passages refer,

⁸³ If by ‘autonomous’ Finkelberg means to set the bar higher than this, so that only action on the basis of rational deliberation, in full knowledge of all relevant circumstances, and free of interference from all competing internal or external sources of motivation will qualify, then this is a standard that neither *atē* nor *atasthaliē* will meet.

moreover, he is warned by both Achilles and Nestor that his actions will have undesirable consequences that he may come to regret (1.239-44, 254-8, 283-4). That Agamemnon disregarded explicit warnings and instead “yielded to his own great-hearted *thymos*” is emphasized by Nestor in Book 9 (108-10); Agamemnon agrees that he did as Nestor says, and calls these actions his *atai* (115-19). Similarly, Achilles is warned not only that it would be *atē* to reject the appeals of the Embassy, but that the consequences will be bad for him (9.508-12), and Patroclus’ *atē* is manifested in his failure to abide by the instructions of Achilles (16.684-7). For Finkelberg (1995: 20 n.22) the fact that Patroclus *forgets* the advice makes it appropriate to call it *atē*, whereas cases of *atasthalīē* (such as Hector’s rejection of Polydamas’ advice) “invariably emphasize the agent’s disagreement with the advice rather than his being oblivious of it”. As we have just noted, however, the *atē* of both Agamemnon and Achilles (in Books 1 and 9 respectively) lies not in their forgetting the advice they are given, but in their rejection of it. But if the *atasthalīē* of Hector in Book 22 resembles the *atē* of Agamemnon and Achilles in manifesting the same misguided and wilful rejection of sound advice, in his case the rejection of Polydamas’ advice itself derives from the fact that he has forgotten the warnings of Zeus that his success will last for only a single day.⁸⁴ It thus springs from a failure to

⁸⁴ Cf. the condemnation of the Trojans as *nēpioi* for following Hector in rejecting Polydamas’ advice at 18.310-13, and the similar evaluation of Patroclus’ *atē* at 16.686. Finkelberg (1995) 21 (cf. Bremer (1969) 101 n.9) agrees that Trojans’ behaviour at 18.310-13 is, in effect, characterized as *atē*, but dissociates their conduct from that of Hector, who allegedly knows what he is doing. But if he wilfully rejects Polydamas’ advice, he foolishly and blindly forgets Zeus’ warning; all those who reject Polydamas’ advice are *nēpioi*. Narratorial comment on characters’ folly (using

remember of a kind that that is called *atē* in the case of Patroclus: in the heat of battle and flushed with success they both forget explicit warnings of the limits that constrain them. That Hector's was a disastrous error, moreover, is diagnosed, like *atē*, from its consequences. Indeed, Hector's emphasis on the fact that it would clearly have been *kerdion* (103, 108) to heed Polydamas' advice indicate that *atasthaliē* resembles *atē* in being antithetical to *kerdos*.⁸⁵ With all these considerations in mind, Hector's actions from Book 8 to Book 22 seem strongly to resemble the pattern that obtains in the cases of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Patroclus.⁸⁶

the terms *nēpios*, *nēpioi*) is a feature common to *atē*-sequences (*Il.* 2.37-40 with 111; 16.46-7 with 685-6) and *atasthaliē*-sequences (*Od.* 1.7-8; cf. Medon's use of *nēpioi* in condemning the suitors' failure to honour Odysseus, which has now led to their downfall, 22.369-70; *atasthaliē* is not used, but the same behaviour is described as such elsewhere). Similarly, *nēpios* is often used of characters' misguided assumptions that the results of their actions will be positive rather than disastrous (*Il.* 8.177-8; 16.260-2; 17.31-2 = 20.197-8; 17.495-8; 20.466; 22.331-2), a scenario which could be construed in terms of *atē*; when the same usage is combined with wilful refusal to heed explicit warnings (*Il.* 12.108-17; *Od.* 9.43-61 – where one notes the similarity to the programmatic lines 1.7-9) one's first thought might rather be of *atasthaliē*. On the intersection of *atē*, *atasthaliē*, and *nēpios*, cf. Stallmach (1968) 23-4; Bremer (1969) 101-2, 105; Francis (1983) 81 and 108 n.12; Padel (1995) 170-1.

⁸⁵ Cf. above, n.2; Stallmach (1968) 12-13.

⁸⁶ Given the frequent association between *atē* and *apatē* (n.27 above) one might also see the pattern in Hector's deception at the hands of Athena, *Il.* 22.226-47, a delusion which he recognizes only when it is too late (294-303); so Bremer (1969) 105.

In characterizing his own conduct as *atasthaliē* Hector describes it pejoratively – he takes upon himself the condemnation of his conduct that he expects from others. He could have done this using the word *atē* (for *atē* can, as we have seen, be used of culpable error, both in emphatic condemnation, as at *Il.* 1.412, and in admission of fault, as at *Il.* 9.115-20). But *atē* and *atasthaliē* are not synonymous. While *atē* does not always exculpate, *atasthaliē* never does – it is always culpable. This is denied by Finkelberg, who writes (1995: 18):

Although it is true that the adjective *atasthalos* is often associated in Homer with *hubris* and its cognates (which is especially true of the *Odyssey*), I cannot agree with J.B. Hainsworth that this association “is the best indication of the sense of this word” [Hainsworth (1988) on *Od.* 8.166]. Note that the two terms are brought into connection with each other only when the behaviour deriving from *atasthalie* is seen as morally condemnable as, for example, in the case of the suitors. This is not so, however, in the case of Hector whose *atasthalie* consists in keeping his troops outside the walls of Troy or in that of Odysseus whose *atasthalie* consists in bringing his companions into the Cyclops’ cave [*Od.* 10.437]; accordingly, *hubris* is not mentioned in these connections. This seems to indicate that *atasthalie* as such is a morally neutral term which can be qualified through *hubris*, not substituted by it.

For Finkelberg, then, *atasthaliē* is distinct from *atē* in being endogenous and at least to some extent intentional, but distinct from *hybris* in not necessarily being

condemnatory.⁸⁷ But the relation between *atasthaliē* and *atē* on the one hand and between *atē*, *atasthaliē*, and *hybris* on the other is more complicated than she suggests. The spectrum of scenarios covered by the root *atasthal-* includes aspects of both *hybris*- and *atē*-scenarios. As we shall see below, this is partly an artefact of a difference in usage between the adjective *atasthalos* and the noun *atasthaliai* (always plural in Homer).

But first the issue of the alleged neutrality of *atasthaliē*. A footnote to the passage just quoted adds that the case for this proposition is supported by the expression

ἄτασθαλίησι κακῇσιν at *Od.* 12.300 and 24.458. But “wicked *atasthaliai*” no more proves that some *atasthaliai* are not morally bad at all than ‘heinous murder’ proves that some murders are not morally bad at all. In such cases the condemnatory epithet emphasizes the noun’s analytically pejorative force. Not only are *hybris*-words used to emphasize the offence denoted by *atasthaliē* etc., but *hybris* itself can also be qualified as *atasthalos* (*Od.* 16.86; 24.352). These are not examples of the condemnatory force of *hybris* being qualified by the application of a morally neutral epithet, but of two condemnatory terms reinforcing each other: the adjective *atasthalos* is used to emphasize that *hybris* is a bad thing. Accordingly, qualification in terms of *hybris* is not required to indicate that *atasthaliē* is a bad thing. Evidence that words from the root *atasthal-* in themselves, unqualified, are used to condemn both agents and their actions in Homer is in fact plentiful. One example is furnished

⁸⁷ Finkelberg’s claim that the *atasthaliē* is intrinsically neutral in terms of moral evaluation, its negative charge being a matter of its contextual modification, is echoed by Cook (2009) 111 n.1.

by the wider context of one of the two passages just discussed: at *Od.* 16.85 ff. Telemachus explains that he will not risk exposing his guest, the disguised Odysseus, to the insults (κερτομέωσιν, 87) of the suitors: λήν γὰρ ἀτάσθαλον ὕβριν ἔχουσι (86). The disguised Odysseus then summarizes the behaviour of which he has just been told (and of which he was previously informed by Eumaeus at 14.81-95) as “the sort of *atasthala* that you say the suitors are contriving in the palace” (οἷα φατε μνηστῆρας ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάσθαι / ἐν μεγάροις, 16.93-4). In this passage, in which *hybris* is qualified as *atasthalos*, the term *atasthala* also serves in its own right to condemn deeds which might otherwise be described as *hybris*. The supplication of the priest, Leodes, in *Odyssey* 22 makes the point even more clearly, for here Leodes’ claim that he never said or did anything *atasthalon* to any of the women of the household, but rather attempted to restrain the suitors when they did such things (22.313-15) is a claim of moral innocence.⁸⁸ Such examples could be multiplied: while the condemnatory force of *atasthalīē* is often supplemented by other condemnatory terms (especially *hybris*),⁸⁹ that same force is also very often conveyed

⁸⁸ Cf. *Od.* 4.693: as a good king, Odysseus never did anything *atasthalon* to anyone – not a claim of infallibility, but a way of rephrasing the words οὔτε τινα ῥέξας ἐξάϊσιον in line 690.

⁸⁹ See *Il.* 11.694-5; 22.418; *Od.* 3.206-7; 12.300-1; 17.587-8; 20.169-71, 369-70; 24.281-2, 458.

by the use of the term itself, alone and unaided.⁹⁰ Hence Hector in *Iliad* 22 uses *atasthaliai* not merely of the miscalculation involved “in keeping his troops outside the walls of Troy” but of behaviour that he knows renders him liable to what is, for a warrior and leader, serious criticism, that he overestimated his own abilities and so ruined his people (22.104-7).⁹¹ This is not an admission of *hybris* (see below), but nor is it a morally neutral presentation. If Finkelberg is right that not all *atasthalīē* is *hybris*, she is wrong that this makes *atasthalīē* a morally neutral term.

We need to explore more fully *atasthalīē*’s affinities with *atē* on the one hand and *hybris* on the other. We saw above that Hector’s *atasthaliai* resembled *atē* especially in the application of the term to an instance of culpable and disastrous error. But in most of the passages in which *atasthal*-words are used, any implication that the

⁹⁰ See *Od.* 7.60 (the giants are an *atasthalos* people); 8.166 (Odysseus deduces that Euryalus is an *atasthalos* man because he has just insulted him); 18.139 (*atasthalā* as the type of behaviour that results from violence and an absence of self-restraint), 143 (contriving *atasthalā* specified as offences against others); 21.146-7 (*atasthaliai* as the kind of behaviour that excites *nemesis*, that morally good people hate); 22.46-7 (Eurymachus refers to the offences Odysseus has just condemned as *atasthalā*).

⁹¹ To be sure, Hector attributes the criticism of 22.107 to τις κακώτερος (106), but he himself shares the negative evaluation of his conduct: as does τις κακώτερος in 107, he describes it in 104 as “ruining the people”; the use of ἀτασθαλίησιν ἐμῇσιν in 104 does not represent a less severe judgement, but is rather part of Hector’s self-condemnation.

behaviour in question has proved or will prove disastrous for the agent is either absent or less than salient in the immediate context. This is where the divergence in usage and connotation between the adjective *atasthalos* and the noun *atasthaliai* enters the picture. An *atasthalon* action is primarily one that is excessive, outrageous, and negative in its impact on others. An *atasthalos* person possesses an entrenched disposition to behave in such ways. Hence, though the Epeians did in fact come to grief in the episode related by Nestor in *Iliad* 11, the designation of their acts as *atasthalai* belongs with the condemnation of their arrogance (ὑπερηφάνεοντες) and *hybris* (11.694-5); while the application of the adjective *atasthalos* to Achilles by Priam at *Il.* 22.418 picks out the disposition to excessive and outrageous behaviour that he has manifested in the treatment of Hector's body and that Priam also captures in his use of the word *obrimoergos* in the same line. Priam does not mean to imply that Achilles' character will be his own undoing. In fact, the adjective *atasthalos* (x 3 *Iliad*, x 15 *Odyssey*) is never employed in the retrospective diagnosis of disastrous error on the basis of its consequences, but always denotes either excessive or outrageous behaviour or the tendency of persons to engage in such behaviour. *Atasthalos* is thus used of actions and dispositions that might otherwise be described in terms of *hybris*.⁹² By contrast, in the vast majority of the occurrences of the noun *atasthaliai* the emphasis is precisely on the disastrous consequences of the agent's

⁹² For the use of terms from the root *atasthal-* in condemnation of vices and offences comparable to *hybris* in Homer (both singly and in combination with *hybris*-words) see Fisher (1992) 151-84 *passim*. Fisher demonstrates (here and in other chapters) a continuity in the sense and reference of *atasthalos* between Homer and later authors that is denied by Finkelberg (1995) 18 n.13.

behaviour, a notion that we saw is intrinsic to *atē*. Of eleven occurrences (x 2 *Iliad*, x 9 *Odyssey*), only one does not have this reference – at *Od.* 21.146-7 the narrator observes that the *atasthaliai* of the suitors were hateful to Leodes alone, and adds a reference to the *nemesis* that the suitors aroused in him (ἄτασθαλῖαι δέ οἱ οἴω / ἐχθραὶ ἔσαν, πᾶσιν δὲ νεμέσσα μνηστήρεσσιν). To be sure, the suitors’ demise is at hand, but the primary reference of both *atasthaliai* and *nemesis* is to the moral character of their actions as such. All the other cases of the noun, however, involve the recognition that agents’ culpable behaviour has proved (or, in one case, will prove) to be their own downfall; in nine of these ten instances, the point is made by means of the use of the noun in the dative plural, giving the cause of the agents’ ruin;⁹³ the remaining occurrence (*Od.* 23.67, in Penelope’s judgement of the suitors) is a variation of the same expression using *διῶ* and accusative plural. Four of the nine occurrences of the dative plural usage emphasize the agent’s or agents’ responsibility

⁹³ *Il.* 4.409 (the Seven against Thebes, whose *atasthaliai* and failure are contrasted with the success, piety, and divine support of the Epigonoι in lines 406-8); 22.104 (Hector); *Od.* 1.7 (Odysseus’ companions, having eaten the cattle of Helios), 34 (human beings in general, with the particular example of Aegisthus); 12.300-1 (a prospective/hypothetical reference to the *atasthaliai* of Odysseus’ companions, which would ensure their ruin were they to slaughter any of Helios’ cattle; the disastrous outcome is foreshadowed at 295); 22.317 (Leodes on the suitors), 416 (Odysseus on the suitors); 24.458 (Halitherses on the suitors). *Od.* 10.437 is a variation in which Eurylochus blames Odysseus’ *atasthaliai* for the loss of their comrades in the Cyclops’ cave.

for their own ruin by means of a possessive pronoun, “their own” or “my own” *atasthaliai*,⁹⁴ but the application of the noun to conduct for which the agent is culpable is clear in all cases.⁹⁵ There is no question of a complete separation in meaning between these uses of the noun and those of the adjective discussed above. The emphasis on disastrous consequences does not remove the emphasis on culpability that the term always entails. Indeed, the same pattern, in which agents’ misdemeanours prove, against expectation, to be their undoing, can also be expressed in terms of *hybris*.⁹⁶ Thus the emphasis on disastrous consequences does not in itself imply an assimilation or approximation to *atē*: to say that one’s *hybris* has proved ruinous is not necessarily to say that one has blindly committed a disastrous error. But it is still significant that the noun *atasthalīē*, unlike the adjective *atasthalos* (or, for that matter, the two Odyssean instances of a verb, ἄτασθάλλω, to be considered

⁹⁴ *Il.* 4.409; 22.104; *Od.* 1.7, 34; cf. Finkelberg (1995) 19-21.

⁹⁵ And of course the two occurrences in *Od.* 1 (7 and 34) famously occur in programmatic contexts which emphasize human beings’ culpability in bringing needless suffering upon themselves. This culpability is evidently maintained even where human *atasthaliai* result in an outcome already desired by divine forces (*Od.* 12.295, 300-1).

⁹⁶ See Odysseus’ lying tales at 14.259-72 (to Eumaeus) and 17.427-41 (to Antinous). In both tales, the protagonist’s companions ignore his warnings, yield to their *hybris*, and suffer the consequences, in a way that both recalls the *atasthaliai* of Odysseus’ actual companions in eating the cattle of Helios and serves as a paradigm for the *hybris* of the suitors. For similar scenarios using the term *nēpios*, cf. above, [000/n.84].

below), can combine a focus on culpable behaviour with an emphasis on human inability to foresee and forestall the consequences that ensue. Halitherses' judgement on the suitors' downfall helps illustrate the focus of such locutions on both culpability and miscalculation (*Od.* 24.454-60):

“κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἵπω.

ὑμετέρῃ κακότητι, φίλοι, τάδε ἔργα γέγοντο· 455

οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ πείθεσθ', οὐ Μέντορι ποιμένι λαῶν,

ὑμετέρους παῖδας καταπαυέμεν ἀφροσυνάων,

οἳ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεζον ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσι,

κτῆματα κείροντες καὶ ἀτιμάζοντες ἄκοιτιν

ἄνδρὸς ἀριστῆος· τὸν δ' οὐκέτι φάντο νέεσθαι.”

460

The suitors' actions involved misjudgements (*aphrosynai*, 457), and they wrongly assumed that Odysseus would never return (460). But these errors belong with their “wicked *atasthaliai*” in consuming the property and dishonouring the wife of a man of high status. This is the kind of imprudence, like that of Agamemnon in the eyes of Achilles at *Il.* 1.412, that is integral to the offence. The closeness of *atasthaliai* of this type to cases of *atē* involving culpable error and deliberate offence is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the centaur Eurytion in *Odyssey* 21: he leaves bearing the consequences of *his own atē* (ἦν ἄτην ὀχέων ἀεσίφρονι θυμῷ, 302); he

himself is the sole cause of the misfortune that he has suffered (οἱ δ' αὐτῷ
 πρώτῳ κακὸν εὔρετο οἰνοβαρείων, 304). Though the form of the locution is
 different, this emphasis bears comparison with those cases in which individuals bring
 about their own downfall through “their own *atasthaliai*”.⁹⁷

Across the range of its uses, then, *atasthalīē* is much more consistently condemnatory
 than is *atē*, and this focus on culpability is highlighted also in those cases in which the
 reference of the term most resembles that of *atē*. *Atē*, on the other hand, can, but need
 not be condemnatory, and its focus is much more definitively on the disastrous
 consequences of an action than on the action’s intrinsic moral character. Yet *atē*-
 scenarios and *atasthalīē* scenarios can overlap and resemble each other. This is
 particularly true when *atē* is used of the failure to appreciate that a deliberate offence
 will have disastrous consequences. We have already noted that Achilles sees
 Agamemnon as both subject to *atē* and guilty of *hybris*. Under this construction,
 Agamemnon’s *atē* bears comparison with the *atasthaliai* of the suitors: both
 Agamemnon and the suitors should know better; they are warned by others that their
 actions are not only wrong but likely to prove disastrous; they ignore advice in the
 mistaken belief that they can dishonour others without negative consequences for
 themselves; and their conduct is regarded as *hybris* not only by their victims but by
 others. Agamemnon’s culpable *atē*, as represented by Achilles, appears to be very
 close indeed to the suitors’ *atasthalīē* and *hybris*. The approximation of *atē* and *hybris*
 emerges also in the case of the Locrian Ajax at *Od.* 4.499-511, whose *atē* involves

⁹⁷ Cf. n.94 above.

arrogant speech that insults the gods.⁹⁸ Equally, Paris' *atē* in outraging his host and abducting Helen (*Il.* 6.356; 24.28) is an action that Menelaus refers to as *aischea* and *lōbē* at *Il.* 13.622-3, the conduct of a nation of *hybristai* (633) whose *menos* is *atasthalon* (634).⁹⁹ Likewise, the *atē* of the centaur Eurytion (especially *Od.* 21.294, 297-8) involves the kind of sympotic excess that is often characterized as *hybris*, and since Antinous' exemplum clearly has an ironic application to himself,¹⁰⁰ the centaur's *atē* will also be brought into relation with what is regularly called the *hybris* and *atasthalīē* of the suitors.

It seems, then, that there is scope for a rapprochement between *atē* and *atasthalīē* that depends first on the fact that *atē* can be used of culpable behaviour and secondly on the regular application of the noun *atasthaliai* to conduct which proves disastrous for the agent. Such a rapprochement is no doubt facilitated by an all-but inevitable popular etymology of *atasthalīē* as deriving from τὸ τῇ ἄτῃ (*vel* ταῖς ἄταις)

θάλλειν ("blooming with *atē*") that is common in ancient scholarship.¹⁰¹ That this is

⁹⁸ Cf. Fisher (1992) 177.

⁹⁹ For the text in *Il.* 6.356 and 24.28 see n.22 above.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Francis (1983) 117 n.67; Fisher (1992) 175-6.

¹⁰¹ Σ *Y Od.* 1.34; Σ *Hes. Th.* 164; Σ *Op.* 239; Σ *Opp. Hal.* 3.491; *Apoll. Soph. Lex.*

Hom. 46.24 Bekker; *Hsch.* α 8026 s.v. ἄτασθαλῖαι; *Et. Gen.* α 1341 s.v.

ἄτασθαλῖαι; *Et. Gud.* α 224 s.v. ἄτάσθαλος; *Eustath. Comm. Od.* 1.8.1-2 on *Od.*

1.7; *Et. Mag.* 162.36-8 s.v. ἄτασθαλῖαι; etc. The Homeric scholia also frequently

not the genuine etymology of the word does not in any way prevent its exerting an influence on poets and their audiences,¹⁰² and in fact such an influence appears to be present in Menelaus' denunciation of the Trojans at *Il.* 13.620-39, where the prime example of the arrogance and *hybris* with which he charges them is the dishonour they inflicted upon him by violating the ordinances of Zeus Xenios and stealing his wife – an action elsewhere attributed to the *atē* of Paris (6.356; 24.28). First, the Trojans are charged with arrogance (*hyperphialoi*, 621) and their shameless dishonouring of their victim is emphasized (ἄλλης μὲν λώβης τε καὶ αἴσχεος οὐκ ἐπιδευεῖς / ἦν ἐμὲ λωβήσασθε κακαὶ κύνες, 622-3). The explicit accusation of *hybris*, which is what this representation entails, soon follows at 633: in helping the Trojans, Zeus is inexplicably favouring *hybristai*. What is most interesting about this passage for our purposes is its emphasis on the link between *hybris* and *koros*, satiety: the “overweening Trojans” have an insatiable appetite for battle

gloss *atē* and *atasthaliē* in identical terms as *hamartia*, *blabē*, or *phrenoblabeia*: cf. Σ *Od.* 1.7, 34; Σ D *Il.* 22.104 on *atasthaliē* with Σ bT *Il.* 2.111; Σ D *Il.* 1.412; 19.95; Σ *Od.* 1.34; 15.233 on *atē*. But *atasthaliē* is not the only term that the scholiasts derive from *atē*: cf. Σ bT *Il.* 18.7 and 22.474 on ἀτύξεσθαι.

¹⁰² Pace Finkelberg (1995) 18, citing Chantraine (1968-80) i. 132 s.v. ἀτάσθαλος; cf. Leumann (1950) 215 n.10 (who notes, however, that the association with *atē* is natural one for native speakers to make); Beekes (2010) 161 s.v. ἀτάσθαλος. On the felt nature of the etymology, cf. Francis (1983) 81 and 108 n.12 (cf. 75-82 in general on the influence of popular etymologies); Fisher (1992) 155.

(Τρῶες ὑπερφίαλοι δεινῆς ἀκόρητοι ἀϋτῆς, 621); they cannot get their fill of war (οὐδὲ δύνανται / φυλόπιδος κορέσασθαι ὁμοῖου πτολέμοιο, 634-5); there is satiety in all things, even those which are much more desirable than war; but it is battle for which the Trojans are insatiable (πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστὶ ... Τρῶες δὲ μάχης ἀκόρητοι ἔασιν, 636-9). Admittedly, the explicit link here is between *hybris* and insatiability, rather than satiety, but this is surely not a sign that the link between *hybris* and *koros*, familiar from later archaic and classical literature,¹⁰³ is inactive. The notion that satiety and insatiability go together is in fact a typical one: *koros* regularly denotes the greed of those for whom too much is never enough.¹⁰⁴ That being so, we notice a link between *hybris*, *koros*, and *atasthaliē* in 633-5: in favouring the Trojans, Zeus gratifies *hybristai*, whose *menos* is *atasthalon* and who cannot get their fill (κορέσασθαι) of warfare. If *atasthalon* activates the etymology “blooming with *atē*” then this is the earliest occurrence of what Fisher calls “the characteristic ‘archaic chain’ of greed, *koros*, *hybris* and *ate*”.¹⁰⁵ This would presuppose the common later presentation of *hybris* (and sometimes *atē* too) in terms

¹⁰³ See (in preference to Doyle (1984) 35-46) Fisher (1992) 70-6, 213, 217-18, 221-3, 230-8, 240-2, 272-4, 280, 336, 347-50, 375-6. For the presence of the link here, cf. Janko (1992) 125 on 13.633-5.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Sol. 4.9, 13.71-6 W = Thgn. 226-31, Thgn. 605-6, 693-4, with Helm (1993).

¹⁰⁵ Fisher (1992) 72 (cf. 206, 213, 221, 236ff.). Cf. Sol. 4.34-5 W; A. *Pers.* 821-2; Ag. 763-73; also Anhalt (1993) 79-96; Balot (2001) 91-3; Helm (2004), esp. 25-34.

of exuberant plant-like growth,¹⁰⁶ and possibly also activate a popular etymological link between *atē* and the verb ἄω, “sate”, “to take one’s fill of”.¹⁰⁷ *Menos*, as an internal substance that gives a creature its force, would be an especially appropriate entity to be qualified as “swelling with *atē*”.¹⁰⁸ That this etymology is known to the audience of the *Odyssey*, at least, is suggested by the occurrence in two passages of that poem – and nowhere else except in grammarians and commentators – of a verbal form ἀτασθάλλω that seems designed to activate it.¹⁰⁹ If all of this is right, an association between *atē* and *atasthaliē* will inevitably have affected the Homeric usage and the Homeric audience’s interpretation of both terms. Such a rapprochement of the two terms will thus have contributed to the interconnexions between *atasthaliē*, *atē*, *hybris*, *koros*, and ‘blooming’ or ‘flourishing’ that are common in the later

¹⁰⁶ On which see Michelini (1978); Fisher (1992) 13-14, 120-1, 449-50; Cairns (1996) 24-6, 28-30. Note the application of this imagery also to *atē* at Sol. 4.34-5 W; A. *Pers.* 821-2.

¹⁰⁷ For passages presupposing this link (of which the best example is Pi. *O.* 1.55-8), see Wyatt (1982) 265-7; though he cites alleged Homeric examples on pp.263-5, however, he does not include this passage from *Il.* 13, and those he does include do not entirely convince. Wyatt himself sees ‘surfeit’ or ‘satiety’ as the original meaning of *atē*, a sense which he argues developed into the Homeric ‘remorse (for an act)’ or ‘remorse-causing act’ *via* a natural association between over-indulgence and regret. We do not have to accept this hypothesis to see an attraction between *atē* and *koros* in this and other passages.

¹⁰⁸ On *menos*, see Jahn (1987) 39-45; Clarke (1999) 110-11.

¹⁰⁹ See *Od.* 18.56-7; 19.87-8.

archaic period and beyond.

Even though a link between *atē* and *atasthaliē* is likely to have been felt in some passages, however, it will not have amounted to a full-scale harmonization of the two concepts; and even in the minds of those who made that link the two will not have been synonymous. *Atē* is firmly tied to single sequences of cause, action, and effect; etymologized as ‘blooming with *atē*’, on the other hand, *atasthaliē* should imply a dispositional tendency, the tendency to be *atasthalos* or to commit *atasthala*, a reprehensible tendency towards culpable *atē*. In Homeric usage, moreover, being *atasthalos* is, as we have seen, not primarily or essentially a tendency blindly to commit errors which have disastrous results, but rather to behave in excessive and outrageous ways. Thus potential overlap between the two concepts would seem to be limited to cases which may be presented in terms of culpable, endogenous, and disastrous error, which is not, by any means, the full range of usage in either case.

Against this background, Hector’s *atasthaliai* stand out somewhat. His use of the term is likely to imply that he has been subject to *atē* – his *atasthaliai* are wilful and culpable errors resulting from a fundamental delusion about what he is able to achieve, a delusion that has now proved disastrous. This presentation sets his career within a pattern of error, disaster, and regret that obtains also in the cases of Agamemnon and Achilles. Arguably, at least, an audience’s sense that *atasthaliē* is in some way related to *atē* helps them place his conduct within a thematic nexus that begins with Agamemnon’s *atē* in Book 1 and extends through the disastrous errors that cost Achilles his best friend. Yet Hector’s *atasthaliai* are atypical. In this case the divergence in usage and connotation between the noun and its cognate adjective is at

its greatest. For Hector is not *atasthalos* in any sense in which that adjective is applied to persons in Homer. In contrast, all but one of the other cases of the dative plural locution (so and so perished as a result of his or their *atasthaliai*) deal with deliberate offences that are or might be described as *hybris* and thus drive no wedge between committing *atasthaliai* and being *atasthalos*.¹¹⁰ In *Iliad* 22, however, Hector surely does not mean to present his own conduct as something akin to *hybris*: as Fisher has pointed out, Hector (though he deliberately disregarded Polydamas' advice) did not deliberately inflict such damage on his people, nor was his intention (unlike that of Agamemnon or of the suitors) to enhance his own honour at his victims' expense.¹¹¹ Here culpable error, even moral failure, none the less stops short of deliberate moral offence. In this respect Hector's *atasthaliai* stand almost alone among Homeric instances of that noun.

It is instructive to compare Hector's *atasthaliai* with the *atē* that Achilles attributes to Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.412). The latter refers to behaviour that Achilles does regard as *hybris*, as a deliberate moral offence. In certain circumstances, then, an action attributed to *atē* (Agamemnon's at 1.412) can be more like *hybris* than one that is attributed to *atasthalie* (Hector's at 22.104). In Agamemnon's case, *atē*, whose origin is sometimes regarded as external to the individual and which can be used to

¹¹⁰ *Il.* 4.409 (the impiety of the Seven against Thebes); *Od.* 1.7; 12.300 (Odysseus' companions and the cattle of Helios); 1.34 (humans in general, with Aegisthus as example); 22.317, 416; 24.458 (the suitors; cf. *δι' ἀτασθαλίας* at 23.67). For the remaining passage, see n.114 below.

¹¹¹ Fisher (1992) 178.

dissociate the individual from his or her actions, is not only used of an action which the speaker regards as a deliberate outrage but is actually part of the speaker's condemnation of that action. Hector, on the other hand, uses a word which is regularly associated with deliberate wrongdoing, but with reference to a lesser offence, a culpable error whose causes may have been deliberate actions, even deliberate disregard of warnings that disaster would result, but still an error whose true nature Hector recognizes only in retrospect and which does not result from a deliberate decision to contravene an ethical norm. Though there are criteria that can be used to distinguish *atē* and *atasthaliē* in general (*atē* may be exogenous, but *atasthaliē* never is; *atē* may exculpate, but *atasthaliē* never does; and *atē* only sometimes condemns, whereas *atasthaliē* always does) none of these will serve in the comparison of these two cases (Achilles blames Agamemnon as Hector blames himself; neither Achilles nor Hector thinks that the error in question has an origin external to the agent). The scripts associated with both scenarios are similar: Agamemnon has disregarded warnings in embarking on a course that Achilles believes will prove disastrous for the Achaeans and so for Agamemnon himself; Hector has recognized that his refusal to heed Polydamas' warnings has proved disastrous for his people and so disastrous for himself. Yet it is still plausible that Achilles' reference to Agamemnon's *atē* picks out something slightly different from what Hector identifies in his reference to his own *atasthaliē*. Agamemnon wilfully ignores advice and deliberately dishonours Achilles, but this is not the focus of the word *atē* in his case. As used by Achilles at *Il.* 1.412, *atē* refers to a genuine (but still culpable) error – Agamemnon cannot foresee the consequences of his hybristic behaviour and thinks that he will be able to carry it through without harm to himself. The point of Achilles' use of the word is to emphasize the element of ignorance and the gulf that will open up between present

ignorance and future regret once the consequences of the action are known.¹¹² Had Achilles said that Agamemnon would come to recognize not his *atē* but his *atasthaliāi* he would not have been presenting a radically different scenario, but rather slanting the same scenario in slightly different terms, focusing in the use of the term itself not on the lack of insight as such, but on its wilful and reprehensible character. *Atē*'s association with action performed in ignorance of its disastrous consequences is intrinsic; the primary focus of *atasthaliāi* seems rather to be the element of wilfulness and the blameworthiness of the action as such.¹¹³ In most cases of the noun, the blameworthiness of the act resides in its nature as a deliberate offence. This is not true of Hector's castigation of his own *atasthaliāi* – though his actions may have been deliberate, he did not deliberately set out to offend; but still the reason for the choice of term appears to lie in its strongly condemnatory force. There is no comparable first-person reference to a character's own culpable *atē*; the most strongly condemnatory uses of that term are all third-person. The strongest first-person use of *atē* in a non-exculpatory way is Agamemnon's private admission of a catalogue of *atai* at *Il.* 9.115-20, which, as we have seen, accepts blame but presents the behaviour in question as aberrant. Hector's choice of a strongly condemnatory term, indeed a term which normally refers to the deliberate contravention of norms, emphasizes his sense that he has failed to live up to the norms to which he should aspire. His self-

¹¹² Cf. Stallmach (1968) 57-8.

¹¹³ This is the substantial kernel of truth in the discussion of Finkelberg (1995), though she uses this difference as the basis for wider generalizations that the evidence will not sustain.

reproach is warranted, yet the term *atasthaliai* retains a touch of hyperbole.¹¹⁴ The severity of his self-reproach contrasts not only with Agamemnon's use of *atē* in accepting a degree of blame in book 9 but also with the same character's boldly exculpatory use of the same term in Book 19. It is a notable feature of Homeric characterization that characters who are hard on themselves emerge in a positive light – not only Helen (at 3.173-5, 240-2; 6.344-58; 24.763-75), but also Achilles, whose self-reproach at *Il.* 18.80-93 and 98-110 bears close comparison with that of Hector in Book 22. Like Hector, Achilles focuses not just on a failure but on a failure as comrade and leader; Hector makes the moral aspect of this failure clear when he calls it *atasthaliai*, but the moral failing that has resulted from Achilles' *atē* is no less clear. In their subjective reactions to their failures as well as in the presentation of their actions in terms of a culpable blindness that leads to disaster Achilles and Hector are close. If Achilles' error is *atē* and Hector's *atasthalie*, this does not mean that the former's reaction is 'non-moral' and the latter's 'moral': there is genuine self-criticism in both cases.

In the *Odyssey*, then, *atē* and *atasthaliai* overlap where both refer to culpable error

¹¹⁴ Similarly, Eurylochus' claim that Odysseus' companions perished as a result of his *atasthaliai* in insisting that they remain in Polyphemus' cave (*Od.* 10.435-7, referring to 9.224-30) may be phrased in a deliberately hyperbolic and insulting manner. In this case Odysseus' behaviour resembles that of Hector in so far as he ignored warnings that in retrospect would have proved salutary (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, ἧ τ' ἄν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν, 9.228) – again an *atasthalie*-scenario that exhibits affinities with *atē*.

that leads to disaster. Hector's *atasthaliai* similarly refer to what he regards as a culpable error, but in his case the rapprochement of the two terms is influenced also by the incorporation of his *atasthaliai* within a thematic pattern that stretches from the abduction of Helen to the fall of Troy and is exemplified within the poem by the disastrous errors of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Patroclus. The rapprochement of the two terms is further illustrated by other contextual similarities between *atē*-scenarios and *atasthalīē*-scenarios, such as the association of both with the adjective *nēpios*.¹¹⁵ The overlap, however, is only partial: to say that a person is *atasthalos* or guilty of *atasthalā* is not to refer as such to the commission of a disastrous error; to describe such an error as *atē* is not necessarily to voice the moral condemnation that is entailed by *atasthalos* and *atasthalīē*. Though both can be used with identical reference to cases of disastrous and culpable error, the focus of *atē* is on the error and the disaster, while that of *atasthalīē* is on the culpability. Yet the application of the terms in closely similar scenarios, especially in those which might be characterized in terms of *hybris*, facilitates and reflects the association of the two *via* the popular etymology that derives *atasthalīē* from τὸ τῇ ᾧ τῇ θάλλειν. *Atē* is the more elusive and flexible term. In its shades of meaning, from mistake to moral error, it lends itself to rhetorical manipulation and facilitates a degree of ethical complexity. This is what makes it more applicable to the presentation of human error in the *Iliad*, where its central thematic location in the tragedy of Achilles, taking in the quarrel, the loss of Patroclus, and the death of Hector, contrasts with the programmatic appearance of *atasthalīē* in the opening passages of the *Odyssey* and the greater frequency of that

¹¹⁵ See above, [000] and n.84.

term throughout the poem.¹¹⁶ In that regard it is significant that even the *Iliad*'s salient occurrence of *atasthaliē* refers to a genuine (divinely inspired) error that is morally castigated not by its victim or its onlookers, but by its perpetrator, whereas the several instances of *atasthaliai* in the *Odyssey* simply illustrate that poem's programmatic emphasis on the contribution that human beings' transgressions make to their own misfortunes.

The meaning of *atē* turns on the notion of 'harm'. The prototypical sense in Homer is that of delusion (a harmful deterioration of mind), but this is always delusion that is diagnosed on the basis of its results (the harm that it causes). Hence the sense 'disaster' (which is also found) is logically prior. *Atē* is not always exogenous; and when it is, its origin is not always divine. It is certainly not always exculpatory or even mitigatory. Its predominance in speech rather than narrative is important, as is its greater prominence in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*, a feature of its thematic importance in the grand sequence of events that links Agamemnon's error in Book 1, through Achilles' rejection of the Embassy in Book 9 and the subsequent death of Patroclus, to the downfall of Hector. *Atē* is therefore integral to what Rutherford calls the poem's tragic form and feeling. This sequence links the culpable error that Achilles diagnoses in Agamemnon in Book 1 to that for which Hector berates himself in Book 22, and thus permits investigation of a rapprochement between *atē* and *atasthaliē*. In Homer there is a genuine degree of overlap between the two concepts, but it is limited rather than systematic. It is on this limited overlap that later and more regular associations between *atē*, *atasthaliē*, *hybris*, and *koros* develop.

¹¹⁶ On which see (e.g.) Cook (1995), esp. ch. 1.

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